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RUSSIA

RUSSIA

BY

SIR DONALD MACKENZIE WALLACE

K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O.

58475

IN TWO VOLUMES

NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION: REVISED, RE-SET, AND IN GREAT PART RE-WRITTEN

VOL. I

WITH PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR AND MAP SHOWING THE DENSITY OF POPULATION.

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PREFACE.

THE first edition of this work, published early in January, 1877, contained the concentrated results of my studies during an uninterrupted residence of six years in Russia—from the beginning of 1870 to the end of 1875. Since that time I have spent in the European and Central-Asian provinces, at different periods, nearly two years more; and in the intervals I have endeavoured to keep in touch with the progress of events. My observations thus extend over a period of thirty-five years.

When I began, a few months ago, to prepare for publication the results of my more recent observations and researches, my intention was to write an entirely new work under the title of "Russia in the Twentieth Century"; but I soon perceived that it would be impossible to explain clearly the present state of things without referring constantly to events of the past, and that I should be obliged to embody in the new work a large portion of the old one, which has been long out of print. The portion to be embodied grew rapidly to such proportions that, in the course of a few weeks, I began to ask myself whether it would not be better simply to recast and

complete my old material. With a view to deciding the question I prepared a list of the principal changes which had taken place during the last quarter of a century, and when I had marshalled them in logical order, I recognised that they were neither so numerous nor so important as I had supposed. Certainly there had been much progress, but it had been nearly all on the old lines. Everywhere I perceived continuity and evolution; nowhere could I discover radical changes and new departures. In the central and local administration the reactionary policy of the latter half of Alexander II.'s reign had been steadily maintained; the revolutionary movement had waxed and waned, but its aims were essentially the same as of old; the Church had remained in its usual somnolent condition; a grave agricultural crisis affecting landed proprietors and peasants had begun, but it was merely a development of a state of things which I had previously described; the manufacturing industry had made gigantic strides, but they were all in the direction which the most competent observers had predicted; in foreign policy the old principles of guiding the natural expansive forces along the lines of least resistance, seeking to reach warm-water ports, and pegging out territorial claims for the future, were persistently followed. No doubt there were pretty clear indications of more radical changes to come, but these changes must belong to the future, and it is merely with the past and the

present that a writer who has no pretensions to being a prophet has to deal.

Under these circumstances it seemed to me advisable to adopt a middle course. Instead of writing an entirely new work I determined to prepare a much extended and amplified edition of the old one, retaining such information about the past as seemed to me of permanent value, and at the same time meeting as far as possible the requirements of those who wish to know the present condition of the country.

In accordance with this view I have revised, rearranged, and supplemented the old material in the light of subsequent events, and I have added five entirely new chapters—three on the revolutionary movement, which has come into prominence since 1877; one on the industrial progress, with which the latest phase of the revolutionary movement is closely connected; and one on the main lines of the present situation as it appears to me at the moment of going to press.

During the many years which I have devoted to the study of Russia, I have received unstinted assistance from many different quarters. Of the friends who originally facilitated my task, and to whom I expressed my gratitude in the preface and notes of the early editions, only three survive — Mme. de Novikoff, M. E. I. Yakushkin, and Dr. Asher. To the numerous friends who have kindly assisted me

in the present edition I must express my thanks collectively, but there are two who stand out from the group so prominently that I may be allowed to mention them personally: these are Prince Alexander Grigorievitch Stcherbátof, who supplied me with voluminous materials regarding the agrarian question generally and the present condition of the peasantry in particular, and M. Albert Brockhaus, who placed at my disposal the gigantic Russian Encyclopædia recently published by his firm (*Entsiklopedítcheski Slovár*, Leipzig and St. Petersburg, 1890–1904). This monumental work, in forty-one volumes, is an inexhaustible storehouse of accurate and well-digested information on all subjects connected with the Russian Empire, and it has often been of great use to me in matters of detail.

With regard to the last chapter of this edition I must claim the reader's indulgence, because the meaning of the title, "The Present Situation," changes from day to day, and I cannot foresee what further developments may occur before the work reaches the hands of the public. As an illustration of this, I may mention that since this work was in type the legal position of Dissenters and Heretics has been greatly improved by the large measure of religious toleration granted by the Emperor in his ukaz of April 30th.

LONDON, 26*th May*, 1905.

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RUSSIA

CHAPTER I.

TRAVELLING IN RUSSIA.

Railways—State Interference—River Communications—Russian "Grand Tour"—The Volga—Kazan—Zhigulinskiya Gori—Finns and Tartars—The Don—Difficulties of Navigation—Discomforts—Rats—Hotels and their Peculiar Customs—Roads—Hibernian Phraseology explained—Bridges—Posting—A *Tarantass*—Requisites for Travelling—Travelling in Winter—Frostbitten—Disagreeable Episodes—Scene at a Post-Station.

Of course travelling in Russia is no longer what it was. During the last half century a vast network of railways has been constructed, and one can now travel in a comfortable first-class carriage from Berlin to St. Petersburg or Moscow, and thence to Odessa, Sebastopol, the Lower Volga, the Caucasus, Central Asia, or Eastern Siberia. Until the outbreak of the war there was a train twice a week, with through carriages, from Moscow to Port Arthur. And it must be admitted that on the main lines the passengers have not much to complain of. The carriages are decidedly better than in England, and in winter they are kept warm by small iron stoves, assisted by double windows and double doors—a very necessary precaution in a land where the thermometer often descends to 30° below zero. The trains never attain, it is true, a high rate of speed—so at least English and Americans think—but then we must remember that Russians are rarely in a hurry, and like to have frequent opportunities of eating and drinking. In Russia time is *not* money; if it were, nearly all the

subjects of the Tsar would always have a large stock of ready money on hand, and would often have great difficulty in spending it. In reality, be it parenthetically remarked, a Russian with a superabundance of ready money is a phenomenon rarely met with in real life.

In conveying passengers at the rate of from fifteen to thirty miles an hour, the railway companies do at least all that they promise; but in one very important respect they do not always strictly fulfil their engagements. The traveller takes a ticket for a certain town, and on arriving at what he imagines to be his destination, he may find merely a railway station surrounded by fields. On making inquiries, he discovers, to his disappointment, that the station is by no means identical with the town bearing the same name, and that the railway has fallen several miles short of fulfilling the bargain, as he understood the terms of the contract. Indeed, it might almost be said that as a general rule railways in Russia, like camel drivers in certain Eastern countries, studiously avoid the towns. This seems at first a strange fact. It is possible to conceive that the Bedouin is so enamoured of tent life and nomadic habits that he shuns a town as he would a man-trap; but surely civil engineers and railway contractors have no such dread of brick and mortar. The true reason, I suspect, is that land within or immediately beyond the municipal barrier is relatively dear, and that the railways, being completely beyond the invigorating influence of healthy competition, can afford to look upon the comfort and convenience of passengers as a secondary consideration. Gradually, it is true, this state of things is being improved by private initiative. As the railways refuse to come to the towns, the towns are extending towards the railways, and already some

prophets are found bold enough to predict that in the course of time those long, new, straggling streets, without an inhabited *hinterland*, which at present try so severely the springs of the rickety droshkis, will be properly paved and kept in decent repair. For my own part, I confess I am a little sceptical with regard to this prediction, and I can only use a favourite expression of the Russian peasants—*daï Bog!* God grant it may be so!

It is but fair to state that in one celebrated instance neither engineers nor railway contractors were directly to blame. From St. Petersburg to Moscow the locomotive runs for a distance of 400 miles, almost as "the crow" is supposed to fly, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. For twelve weary hours the passenger in the express train looks out on forest and morass, and rarely catches sight of human habitation. Only once he perceives in the distance what may be called a town; it is Tver which has been thus favoured, not because it is a place of importance, but simply because it happened to be near the bee-line. And why was the railway constructed in this extraordinary fashion? For the best of all reasons—because the Tsar so ordered it. When the preliminary survey was being made, Nicholas I. learned that the officers entrusted with the task—and the Minister of Ways and Roads in the number—were being influenced more by personal than technical considerations, and he determined to cut the Gordian knot in true Imperial style. When the Minister laid before him the map with the intention of explaining the proposed route, he took a ruler, drew a straight line from the one terminus to the other, and remarked in a tone that precluded all discussion, "You will construct the line so!" And the line was so constructed—remaining to all future ages,

like St. Petersburg and the Pyramids, a magnificent monument of autocratic power.

Formerly this well-known incident was often cited in whispered philippics to illustrate the evils of the autocratic form of government. Imperial whims, it was said, over-ride grave economic considerations. In recent years, however, a change seems to have taken place in public opinion, and some people now assert that this so-called Imperial whim was an act of far-seeing policy. As by far the greater part of the goods and passengers are carried the whole length of the line, it is well that the line should be as short as possible, and that branch lines should be constructed to the towns lying to the right and left. Evidently there is a good deal to be said in favour of this view.

In the development of the railway system there has been another disturbing cause, which is not likely to occur to the English mind. In England, individuals and companies habitually act according to their private interests, and the State interferes as little as possible; private initiative does as it pleases, unless the authorities can prove that important bad consequences will necessarily result. In Russia, the *onus probandi* lies on the other side; private initiative is allowed to do nothing until it gives guarantees against all possible bad consequences. When any great enterprise is projected, the first question is—"How will this new scheme affect the interests of the State?" Thus, when the course of a new railway has to be determined, the military authorities are among the first to be consulted, and their opinion has a great influence on the ultimate decision. The natural consequence is that the railway map of Russia presents to the eye of the strategist much that is quite unintelligible to the ordinary observer—a fact that will become apparent even to the uninitiated as soon as a

war breaks out in Eastern Europe. Russia is no longer what she was in the days of the Crimean War, when troops and stores had to be conveyed hundreds of miles by the most primitive means of transport. At that time she had only 750 miles of railway; now she has over 36,000 miles, and every year new lines are constructed.

The water communication has likewise in recent years been greatly improved. On the principal rivers there are now good steamers. Unfortunately, the climate puts serious obstructions in the way of navigation. For nearly half of the year the rivers are covered with ice, and during a great part of the open season navigation is difficult. When the ice and snow melt, the rivers overflow their banks and lay a great part of the low-lying country under water, so that many villages can only be approached in boats; but very soon the flood subsides, and the water falls so rapidly that by midsummer the larger steamers have great difficulty in picking their way among the sandbanks. The Neva alone—that queen of northern rivers—has at all times a plentiful supply of water.

Besides the Neva, the rivers commonly visited by the tourist are the Volga and the Don, which form part of what may be called the Russian grand tour. Englishmen who wish to see something more than St. Petersburg and Moscow generally go by rail to Nizhni-Novgorod, where they visit the great fair, and then get on board one of the Volga steamers. For those who have mastered the important fact that Russia is not a country of fine scenery, the voyage down the river is pleasant enough. The left bank is as flat as the banks of the Rhine below Cologne, but the right bank is high, occasionally well wooded, and not devoid of a certain tame picturesqueness. Early on the second day the steamer reaches Kazan,

once the capital of an independent Tartar khanate, and still containing a considerable Tartar population. Several *metchets* (as the Mahometan houses of prayer are here termed) with their diminutive minarets in the lower part of the town show that Islamism still survives, though the khanate was annexed to Muscovy more than three centuries ago; but the town, as a whole, has a European rather than an Asiatic character. If any one visits it in the hope of getting "a glimpse of the East," he will be grievously disappointed, unless, indeed, he happen to be one of those imaginative tourists who always discover what they wish to see. And yet it must be admitted that, of all the towns on the route, Kazan is the most interesting. Though not Oriental, it has a peculiar character of its own, whilst all the others—Simbirsk, Samara, Sarátof—are as uninteresting as Russian provincial towns commonly are. The full force and solemnity of that expression will be explained in the sequel.

Probably about sunrise on the third day something like a range of mountains will appear on the horizon. It may be well to say at once, to prevent disappointment, that in reality nothing worthy of the name of mountain is to be found in that part of the country. The nearest mountain range in that direction is the Caucasus, which is hundreds of miles distant, and consequently cannot by any possibility be seen from the deck of a steamer. The elevations in question are simply a low range of hills, called the Zhigulinskiya Gori. In Western Europe they would not attract much attention, but "in the kingdom of the blind," as the French proverb has it, "the one-eyed man is king"; and in a flat region like Eastern Russia these hills form a prominent feature. Though they have nothing of Alpine grandeur, yet their well-wooded

slopes, coming down to the water's edge—especially when covered with the delicate tints of early spring, or the rich yellow and red of autumnal foliage—leave an impression on the memory not easily effaced.

On the whole—with all due deference to the opinions of my patriotic Russian friends—I must say that Volga scenery hardly repays the time, trouble and expense which a voyage from Nizhni to Tsaritsin demands. There are some pretty bits here and there, but they are "few and far between." A glass of the most exquisite wine diluted with a gallon of water makes a very insipid beverage. The deck of the steamer is generally much more interesting than the banks of the river. There one meets with curious travelling companions. The majority of the passengers are probably Russian peasants, who are always ready to chat freely without demanding a formal introduction, and to relate—with certain restrictions—to a new acquaintance the simple story of their lives. Often I have thus whiled away the weary hours both pleasantly and profitably, and have always been impressed with the peasant's homely common sense, good-natured kindliness, half-fatalistic resignation, and strong desire to learn something about foreign countries. This last peculiarity makes him question as well as communicate, and his questions, though sometimes apparently childish, are generally to the point.

Among the passengers are probably also some representatives of the various Finnish tribes inhabiting this part of the country; they may be interesting to the ethnologist who loves to study physiognomy, but they are far less sociable than the Russians. Nature seems to have made them silent and morose, whilst their conditions of life have made them shy and distrustful. The Tartar, on the

other hand, is almost sure to be a lively and amusing companion. Most probably he is a peddler or small trader of some kind. The bundle on which he reclines contains his stock-in-trade, composed, perhaps, of cotton printed goods and especially bright-coloured cotton handkerchiefs. He himself is enveloped in a capacious greasy *khalát*, or dressing gown, and wears a fur cap, though the thermometer may be at 90° in the shade. The roguish twinkle in his small piercing eyes contrasts strongly with the sombre, stolid expression of the Finnish peasants sitting near him. He has much to relate about St. Petersburg, Moscow, and perhaps Astrakhan; but, like a genuine trader, he is very reticent regarding the mysteries of his own craft. Towards sunset he retires with his companions to some quiet spot on the deck to recite the evening prayers. Here all the good Mahometans on board assemble and stroke their beards, kneel on their little strips of carpet and prostrate themselves, all keeping time as if they were performing some new kind of drill under the eye of a severe drill-sergeant.

If the voyage is made about the end of September, when the traders are returning home from the fair at Nizhni-Novgorod, the ethnologist will have a still better opportunity of study. He will then find not only representatives of the Finnish and Tartar races, but also Armenians, Circassians, Persians, Bokhariots, and other Orientals—a motley and picturesque but decidedly unsavoury cargo.

However great the ethnographical variety on board may be, the traveller will probably find that four days on the Volga are quite enough for all practical and æsthetic purposes, and instead of going on to Astrakhan he will quit the steamer at Tsaritsin. Here he will find a railway of about fifty miles in length,

connecting the Volga and the Don. I say advisedly a railway, and not a train, because trains on this line are not very frequent. When I first visited the locality, thirty years ago, there were only two a week, so that if you inadvertently missed one train you had to wait about three days for the next. Prudent, nervous people preferred travelling by the road, for on the railway the strange jolts and mysterious creakings were very alarming. On the other hand the pace was so slow that running off the rails would have been merely an amusing episode, and even a collision could scarcely have been attended with serious consequences. Happily, things are improving, even in this outlying part of the country. Now there is one train daily, and it goes at a less funereal pace.

From Kalatch, at the Don end of the line, a steamer starts for Rostoff, which is situated near the mouth of the river. The navigation of the Don is much more difficult than that of the Volga. The river is extremely shallow, and the sandbanks are continually shifting, so that many times in the course of the day the steamer runs aground. Sometimes she is got off by simply reversing the engines, but not unfrequently she sticks so fast that the engines have to be assisted. This is effected in a curious way. The captain always gives a number of stalwart Cossacks a free passage on condition that they will give him the assistance he requires; and as soon as the ship sticks fast, he orders them to jump overboard with a stout hawser and haul her off! The task is not a pleasant one, especially as the poor fellows cannot afterwards change their clothes; but the order is always obeyed with alacrity and without grumbling. Cossacks, it would seem, have no personal acquaintance with colds and rheumatism.

In the most approved manuals of geography the Don figures as one of the principal European rivers, and its length and breadth give it a right to be considered as such; but its depth in many parts is ludicrously out of proportion to its length and breadth. I remember one day seeing the captain of a large, flat-bottomed steamer slacken speed, to avoid running down a man on horseback who was attempting to cross his bows in the middle of the stream. Another day a not less characteristic incident happened. A Cossack passenger wished to be set down at a place where there was no pier, and on being informed that there was no means of landing him, coolly jumped overboard and walked ashore. This simple method of disembarking cannot, of course, be recommended to those who have no local knowledge regarding the exact position of sandbanks and deep pools.

Good serviceable fellows are those Cossacks who drag the steamer off the sandbanks, and they are often entertaining companions. Many of them can relate from their own experience, in plain, unvarnished style, stirring episodes of irregular warfare, and if they happen to be in a communicative mood they may divulge a few secrets regarding their simple, primitive commissariat system. Whether they are confidential or not, the traveller who knows the language will spend his time more profitably and pleasantly in chatting with them than in gazing listlessly at the uninteresting country through which he is passing.

Unfortunately, these Don steamers carry a large number of free passengers of another and more objectionable kind, who do not confine themselves to the deck, but unceremoniously find their way into the cabin, and prevent thin-skinned travellers from sleeping. I know too little of natural history to decide whether these agile, bloodthirsty parasites are of the

same species as those which in England assist unofficially the Sanitary Commissioners by punishing uncleanliness; but I may say that their function in the system of created things is essentially the same, and they fulfil it with a zeal and energy beyond all praise. Possessing for my own part a happy immunity from their indelicate attentions, and being perfectly innocent of entomological curiosity, I might, had I been alone, have overlooked their existence, but I was constantly reminded of their presence by less happily constituted mortals, and the complaints of the sufferers received a curious official confirmation. On arriving at the end of the journey, I asked permission to spend the night on board, and I noticed that the captain acceded to my request with more readiness and warmth than I expected. Next morning the fact was fully explained. When I began to express my thanks for having been allowed to pass the night in a comfortable cabin, my host interrupted me with a good-natured laugh, and assured me that, on the contrary, he was under obligations to me. "You see," he said, assuming an air of mock gravity, "I have always on board a large body of light cavalry, and when I have all this part of the ship to myself they make a combined attack on me; whereas, when some one is sleeping close by, they divide their forces!"

On certain steamers on the Sea of Azof the privacy of the sleeping cabin is disturbed by still more objectionable intruders; I mean rats. During one short voyage which I made on board the *Kertch*, these disagreeable visitors became so importunate in the lower regions of the vessel that the ladies obtained permission to sleep in the deck saloon. After this arrangement had been made, we unfortunate male passengers received redoubled attention from our tormentors. Awakened early one morning by the sensation of

something running over me as I lay in my berth, I conceived a method of retaliation. It seemed to me possible that, in the event of another visit, I might, by seizing the proper moment, kick the rat up to the ceiling with such force as to produce concussion of the brain and instant death. Very soon I had an opportunity of putting my plan into execution. A significant shaking of the little curtain at the foot of the berth showed that it was being used as a scaling ladder. I lay perfectly still, quite as much interested in the sport as if I had been waiting, rifle in hand, for big game. Soon the intruder peeped into my berth, looked cautiously around him, and then proceeded to walk stealthily across my feet. In an instant he was shot upwards. First was heard a sharp knock on the ceiling, and then a dull "thud" on the floor. The precise extent of the injuries inflicted I never discovered, for the victim had sufficient strength and presence of mind to effect his escape; and the gentleman at the other side of the cabin, who had been roused by the noise, protested against my repeating the experiment, on the ground that, though he was willing to take his own share of the intruders, he strongly objected to having other people's rats kicked into his berth.

On such occasions it is of no use to complain to the authorities. When I met the captain on deck I related to him what had happened, and protested vigorously against passengers being exposed to such annoyances. After listening to me patiently, he coolly replied, entirely overlooking my protestations, "Ah! I did better than that this morning; I allowed my rat to get under the blanket, and then smothered him!"

Railways and steamboats, even when their arrangements leave much to be desired, invariably effect a salutary revolution in hotel accommodation; but this revolution is of necessity gradual. Foreign hotel

keepers must immigrate and give the example; suitable houses must be built; servants must be properly trained; and, above all, the native travellers must learn the usages of civilised society. In Russia this revolution is in progress, but still far from being complete. The cities where foreigners most do congregate —St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa—already possess hotels that will bear comparison with those of Western Europe, and some of the more important provincial towns can offer very respectable accommodation; but there is still much to be done before the West-European can travel with comfort even on the principal routes. Cleanliness, the first and most essential element of comfort, as we understand the term, is still a rare commodity, and often cannot be procured at any price.

Even in good hotels, when they are of the genuine Russian type, there are certain peculiarities which, though not in themselves objectionable, strike a foreigner as peculiar. Thus, when you alight at such an hotel, you are expected to examine a considerable number of rooms, and to inquire about the respective prices. When you have fixed upon a suitable apartment, you will do well, if you wish to practise economy, to propose to the landlord considerably less than he demands; and you will generally find, if you have a talent for bargaining, that the rooms may be hired for somewhat less than the sum first stated. You must be careful, however, to leave no possibility of doubt as to the terms of the contract. Perhaps you assume that, as in taking a cab a horse is alway supplied without special stipulation, so in hiring a bedroom the bargain includes a bed and the necessary appurtenances. Such an assumption will not always be justified. The landlord may perhaps give you a bedstead without extra charge, but if he be uncorrupted by foreign notions, he will certainly not spontaneously

supply you with bed-linen, pillows, blankets, and towels. On the contrary, he will assume that you carry all these articles with you, and if you do not, you must pay for them.

This ancient custom has produced among Russians of the old school a kind of fastidiousness to which we are strangers. They strongly dislike using sheets, blankets, and towels which are in a certain sense public property, just as we should strongly object to putting on clothes which had been already worn by other people. And the feeling may be developed in people not Russian by birth. For my own part, I confess to having been conscious of a certain disagreeable feeling on returning in this respect to the usages of so-called civilised Europe.

The inconvenience of carrying about the essential articles of bedroom furniture is by no means so great as might be supposed. Bedrooms in Russia are always heated during cold weather, so that one light blanket, which may be used also as a railway rug, is quite sufficient; whilst sheets, pillow-cases, and towels take up little space in a portmanteau. The most cumbrous object is the pillow, for air-cushions, having a disagreeable odour, are not well suited for the purpose. But Russians are accustomed to this encumbrance. In former days—as at the present time in those parts of the country where there are neither railways nor macadamised roads—people travelled in carts or carriages without springs, and in these instruments of torture a huge pile of cushions or pillows is necessary to avoid contusions and dislocations. On the railways, the jolts and shaking are not deadly enough to require such an antidote; but, even in unconservative Russia, customs outlive the conditions that created them; and at every railway station you may see men and women carrying about their pillows with them as

we carry wraps. A genuine Russian merchant who loves comfort and respects tradition may travel without a portmanteau, but he considers his pillow as an indispensable *article de voyage.*

To return to the old-fashioned hotel. When you have completed the negotiations with the landlord, you will notice that, unless you have a servant with you, the waiter prepares to perform the duties of *valet de chambre.* Do not be surprised at his officiousness, which seems founded on the assumption that you are three-fourths paralysed. Formerly, every well-born Russian had a valet always in attendance, and never dreamed of doing for himself anything which could by any possibility be done for him. You notice that there is no bell in the room, and no mechanical means of communicating with the world below stairs. That is because the attendant is supposed to be always within call, and it is so much easier to shout than to get up and ring the bell.

In the good old times all this was quite natural. The well-born Russian had commonly a superabundance of domestic serfs, and there was no reason why one or two of them should not accompany their master when his Honour undertook a journey. An additional person in the *tarantass* did not increase the expense, and considerably diminished the little unavoidable inconveniences of travel. But times have changed. In 1861 the domestic serfs were emancipated by Imperial ukaz. Free servants demand wages; and on railways or steamers a single ticket does not include an attendant. The present generation must therefore get through life with a more modest supply of valets, and must learn to do with its own hands much that was formerly performed by serf labour. Still, a gentleman brought up in the old conditions cannot be expected to dress himself

without assistance, and accordingly the waiter remains in your room to act as valet. Perhaps, too, in the early morning you may learn in an unpleasant way that other parts of the old system are not yet extinct. You may hear, for instance, resounding along the corridors such an order as—"Petrusha! Petrusha!! Stakán vodý!!!" ("Little Peter, little Peter, a glass of water!") shouted in a stentorian voice that would startle the Seven Sleepers.

When the toilet operations are completed, and you order tea—one always orders tea in Russia—you will be asked whether you have your own tea and sugar with you. If you are an experienced traveller you will be able to reply in the affirmative, for good tea can be bought only in certain well-known shops, and can rarely be found in hotels. A huge, steaming tea-urn, called a samovar—etymologically, a "self-boiler"—will be brought in, and you will make your tea according to your taste. The tumbler, you know of course, is to be used as a cup, and when using it you must be careful not to cauterise the points of your fingers. If you should happen to have anything eatable or drinkable in your travelling basket, you need not hesitate to take it out at once, for the waiter will not feel at all aggrieved or astonished at your doing nothing "for the good of the house." The twenty or twenty-five kopeks that you pay for the samovar—tea-pot, tumbler, saucer, spoon, and slop-basin being included under the generic term *pribór*—frees you from all corkage and similar dues.

These and other remnants of old customs are now rapidly disappearing, and will, doubtless, in a very few years be things of the past—things to be picked up in out-of-the-way corners, and chronicled by social archæology; but they are still to be found in towns not unknown to Western Europe.

Many of these old customs, and especially the old method of travelling, may be studied in their pristine purity throughout a great part of the country. Though railway construction has been pushed forward with great energy during the last forty years, there are still vast regions where the ancient solitudes have never been disturbed by the shrill whistle of the locomotive, and roads have remained in their primitive condition. Even in the central provinces one may still travel hundreds of miles without ever encountering anything that recalls the name of Macadam.

If popular rumour is to be trusted, there is somewhere in the Highlands of Scotland, by the side of a turnpike, a large stone bearing the following doggerel inscription:—

> "If you had seen this road before it was made,
> You'd lift up your hands and bless General Wade."

Any educated Englishman reading this strange announcement would naturally remark that the first line of the couplet contains a logical contradiction, probably of Hibernian origin; but I have often thought, during my wanderings in Russia, that the expression, if not logically justifiable, might for the sake of vulgar convenience be legalised by a Permissive Bill. The truth is that, as a Frenchman might say, "there are roads and roads"—roads made and roads unmade, roads artificial and roads natural. Now, in Russia, roads are nearly all of the unmade, natural kind, and are so conservative in their nature that they have at the present day precisely the same appearance that they had many centuries ago. They have thus for imaginative minds something of what is called "the charm of historical association." The only perceptible change that takes place in them during a series of generations is that the ruts shift their position. When these become so deep that fore-wheels can no longer

fathom them, it becomes necessary to begin making a new pair of ruts to the right or left of the old ones; and as the roads are commonly of gigantic breadth, there is no difficulty in finding a place for the operation. How the old ones get filled up I cannot explain; but as I have rarely seen in any part of the country, except perhaps in the immediate vicinity of towns, a human being engaged in road repairing, I assume that beneficent Nature somehow accomplishes the task without human assistance, either by means of alluvial deposits, or by some other cosmical action known only to physical geographers.

On the roads one occasionally encounters bridges; and here, again, I have discovered in Russia a key to the mysteries of Hibernian phraseology. An Irish member once declared to the House of Commons that the Church was "the bridge that separated the two great sections of the Irish people." As bridges commonly connect rather than separate, the metaphor was received with roars of laughter. If the honourable members who joined in the hilarious applause had travelled much in Russia, they would have been more moderate in their merriment; for in that country, despite the laudable activity of the modern system of local administration created in the Sixties, bridges often act still as a barrier rather than a connecting link, and to cross a river by a bridge may still be what is termed in popular phrase "a tempting of Providence." The cautious driver will generally prefer to take to the water, if there is a ford within a reasonable distance, though both he and his human load may be obliged, in order to avoid getting wet feet, to assume undignified postures that would afford admirable material for the caricaturist. But this little bit of discomfort, even though the luggage should be soaked in the process of fording, is as nothing com-

pared to the danger of crossing by the bridge. As I have no desire to harrow unnecessarily the feelings of the reader, I refrain from all description of ugly accidents, ending in bruises and fractures, and shall simply explain in a few words how a successful passage is effected.

When it is possible to approach the bridge without sinking up to the knees in mud, it is better to avoid all risks by walking over and waiting for the vehicle on the other side; and when this is impossible, a preliminary survey is advisable. To your inquiries whether it is safe, your *yamstchik* (postboy) is sure to reply, "Nitchevo!"—a word which, according to the dictionaries, means "nothing," but which has, in the mouths of the peasantry, a great variety of meanings, as I may explain at some future time. In the present case it may be roughly translated, "There is no danger." "Nitchevo, Barin, proyédem" ("There is no danger, sir; we shall get over"), he repeats. You may refer to the generally rotten appearance of the structure, and point in particular to the great holes sufficient to engulf half a post-horse. "Ne bos', Bog pomozhet" ("Do not fear, God will help"), replies coolly your phlegmatic Jehu. You may have your doubts as to whether in this irreligious age Providence will intervene specially for your benefit; but your *yamstchik*, who has more faith or fatalism, leaves you little time to solve the problem. Making hurriedly the sign of the cross, he gathers up his reins, waves his little whip in the air, and, shouting lustily, urges on his team. The operation is not wanting in excitement. First there is a short descent; then the horses plunge wildly through a zone of deep mud; next comes a fearful jolt, as the vehicle is jerked up on to the first planks; then the transverse planks, which are but loosely held in their places, rattle and rumble

ominously, as the experienced, sagacious animals pick their way cautiously and gingerly among the dangerous holes and crevices; lastly, you plunge with a horrible jolt into a second mud zone, and finally regain *terra firma*, conscious of that pleasant sensation which a young officer may be supposed to feel after his first cavalry charge in rëal warfare.

Of course here, as elsewhere, familiarity breeds indifference. When you have successfully crossed without serious accident a few hundred bridges of this kind, you learn to be as cool and fatalistic as your *yamstchik*.

The reader who has heard of the gigantic reforms that have been repeatedly imposed on Russia by a paternal Government, may naturally be astonished to learn that the roads are still in such a disgraceful condition. But for this, as for everything else in the world, there is a good and sufficient reason. The country is still, comparatively speaking, thinly populated, and in many regions it is difficult, or practically impossible, to procure in sufficient quantity stone of any kind, and especially hard stone fit for road-making. Besides this, when roads are made, the severity of the climate renders it difficult to keep them in good repair.

When a long journey has to be undertaken through a region in which there are no railways, there are several ways in which it may be effected. In former days, when time was of still less value than at present, many landed proprietors travelled with their own horses, and carried with them, in one or more capacious, lumbering vehicles, all that was required for the degree of civilisation which they had attained; and their requirements were often considerable. The *grand seigneur*, for instance, who spent the greater part of his life amidst the luxury of the court society,

naturally took with him all the portable elements of civilisation. His baggage included, therefore, camp-beds, table-linen, silver plate, a *batterie de cuisine*, and a French cook. The pioneers and part of the commissariat force were sent on in advance, so that his Excellency found at each halting-place everything prepared for his arrival. The poor owner of a few dozen serfs dispensed, of course, with the elaborate commissariat department, and contented himself with such modest fare as could be packed in the holes and corners of a single *tarantass*.

It will be well to explain here, parenthetically, what a *tarantass* is, for I shall often have occasion to use the word. It may be briefly defined as a phaeton without springs. The function of springs is imperfectly fulfilled by two parallel wooden bars, placed longitudinally, on which is fixed the body of the vehicle. It is commonly drawn by three horses—a strong, fast trotter in the shafts, flanked on each side by a light, loosely-attached horse that goes along at a gallop. The points of the shafts are connected by the *duga*, which looks like a gigantic, badly-formed horseshoe rising high above the collar of the trotter. To the top of the *duga* is attached the bearing-rein, and underneath the highest part of it is fastened a big bell—in the southern provinces I found two, and sometimes even three bells—which, when the country is open and the atmosphere still, may be heard a mile off. The use of the bell is variously explained. Some say it is in order to frighten the wolves, and others that it is to avoid collisions on the narrow forest paths. But neither of these explanations is entirely satisfactory. It is used chiefly in summer, when there is no danger of an attack from wolves; and the number of bells is greater in the south, where there are no forests. Perhaps the original intention was—I throw

out the hint for the benefit of a certain school of archæologists—to frighten away evil spirits; and the practice has been retained partly from unreasoning conservatism, and partly with a view to lessen the chances of collisions. As the roads are noiselessly soft, and the drivers not always vigilant, the dangers of collision are considerably diminished by the ceaseless peal.

Altogether, the *tarantass* is well adapted to the conditions in which it is used. By the curious way in which the horses are harnessed it recalls the war-chariot of ancient times. The horse in the shafts is compelled by the bearing-rein to keep his head high and straight before him—though the movement of his ears shows plainly that he would very much like to put it somewhere farther away from the tongue of the bell—but the side horses gallop freely, turning their heads outwards in classical fashion. I believe that this position is assumed not from any sympathy on the part of these animals for the remains of classical art, but rather from the natural desire to keep a sharp eye on the driver. Every movement of his right hand they watch with close attention, and as soon as they discover any symptoms indicating an intention of using the whip, they immediately show a desire to quicken the pace.

Now that the reader has gained some idea of what a *tarantass* is, we may return to the modes of travelling through the regions which are not yet supplied with railways.

However enduring and long-winded horses may be, they must be allowed sometimes, during a long journey, to rest and feed. Travelling long distances with one's own horses is therefore necessarily a slow operation, and is now quite antiquated. People who value their time prefer to make use of the Imperial Post organisa-

tion. On all the principal lines of communication there are regular post-stations, at from ten to twenty miles apart, where a certain number of horses and vehicles are kept for the convenience of travellers. To enjoy the privilege of this arrangement, one has to apply to the proper authorities for a *Podorozhnaya* —a large sheet of paper stamped with the Imperial Eagle, and bearing the name of the recipient, the destination, and the number of horses to be supplied. In return, a small sum is paid for imaginary road-repairs; the rest of the sum is paid by instalments at the respective stations.

Armed with this document you go to the post-station and demand the requisite number of horses. Three is the number generally used, but if you travel lightly and are indifferent to appearances, you may content yourself with a pair. The vehicle is a kind of *tarantass*, but not such as I have just described. The essentials in both are the same, but those which the Imperial Government provides resemble an enormous cradle on wheels rather than a phaeton. An armful of hay spread over the bottom of the wooden box is supposed to play the part of seats and cushions. You are expected to sit under the arched covering, and extend your legs so that the feet lie beneath the driver's seat; but it is advisable, unless the rain happens to be coming down in torrents, to get this covering unshipped, and travel without it. When used, it painfully curtails the little freedom of movement that you enjoy, and when you are shot upwards by some obstruction on the road, it is apt to arrest your ascent by giving you a violent blow on the top of the head.

It is to be hoped that you are in no hurry to start, otherwise your patience may be sorely tried. The horses, when at last produced, may seem to you the

most miserable screws that it was ever your misfortune to behold; but you had better refrain from expressing your feelings, for if you use violent, uncomplimentary language, it may turn out that you have been guilty of gross calumny. I have seen many a team composed of animals which a third-class London costermonger would have spurned, and in which it was barely possible to recognise the equine form, do their duty in highly creditable style, and go along at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour, under no stronger incentive than the voice of the *yamstchik*. Indeed, the capabilities of these lean, slouching, ungainly quadrupeds are often astounding when they are under the guidance of a man who knows how to drive them. Though such a man commonly carries a little harmless whip, he rarely uses it except by waving it horizontally in the air. His incitements are all oral. He talks to his cattle as he would to animals of his own species—now encouraging them by tender, caressing epithets, and now launching at them expressions of indignant scorn. At one moment they are his "little doves," and at the next they have been transformed into "cursed hounds." How far they understand and appreciate this curious mixture of endearing cajolery and contemptuous abuse it is difficult to say, but there is no doubt that it somehow has upon them a strange and powerful influence.

Anyone who undertakes a journey of this kind should possess a well-knit, muscular frame and good tough sinews, capable of supporting an unlimited amount of jolting and shaking; at the same time, he should be well inured to all the hardships and discomforts incidental to what is vaguely termed "roughing it." When he wishes to sleep in a post-station, he will find nothing softer than a wooden bench, unless he can induce the keeper to put for him on the floor a bundle

of hay, which is perhaps softer, but on the whole more disagreeable than the deal board. Sometimes he will not get even the wooden bench, for in ordinary post-stations there is but one room for travellers, and the two benches—there are rarely more—may be already occupied. When he does obtain a bench, and succeeds in falling asleep, he must not be astonished if he is disturbed once or twice during the night by people who use the apartment as a waiting-room whilst the post-horses are being changed. These passers-by may even order a samovar, and drink tea, chat, laugh, smoke, and make themselves otherwise disagreeable, utterly regardless of the sleepers. Then there are the other intruders, smaller in size but equally objectionable, of which I have already spoken when describing the steamers on the Don. Regarding them I desire to give merely one word of advice: As you will have abundant occupation in the work of self-defence, learn to distinguish between belligerents and neutrals, and follow the simple principle of international law, that neutrals should not be molested. They may be very ugly, but ugliness does not justify assassination. If, for instance, you should happen in awaking to notice a few black or brown beetles running about your pillow, restrain your murderous hand! If you kill them you commit an act of unnecessary bloodshed; for though they may playfully scamper around you, they will do you no bodily harm.

Another requisite for a journey in unfrequented districts is a knowledge of the language. It is popularly supposed that if you are familiar with French and German you may travel anywhere in Russia. So far as the great cities and chief lines of communication are concerned, this may be true, but beyond that it is a delusion. The Russian has not, any more than the West-European, received from Nature the gift of

tongues. Educated Russians often speak one or two foreign languages fluently, but the peasants know no language but their own, and it is with the peasantry that one comes in contact. And to converse freely with the peasant requires a considerable familiarity with the language—far more than is required for simply reading a book. Though there are few provincialisms, and all classes of the people use the same words—except the words of foreign origin, which are used only by the upper classes—the peasant always speaks in a more laconic and more idiomatic way than the educated man.

In the winter months travelling is in some respects pleasanter than in summer, for snow and frost are great macadamisers. If the snow falls evenly, there is for some time the most delightful road that can be imagined. No jolts, no shaking, but a smooth, gliding motion, like that of a boat in calm water, and the horses gallop along as if totally unconscious of the sledge behind them. Unfortunately, this happy state of things does not last all through the winter. The road soon gets cut up, and deep transverse furrows (*ukháby*) are formed. How these furrows come into existence I have never been able clearly to comprehend, though I have often heard the phenomenon explained by men who imagined they understood it. Whatever the cause and mode of formation may be, certain it is that little hills and valleys do get formed, and the sledge, as it crosses over them, bobs up and down like a boat in a chopping sea, with this important difference, that the boat falls into a yielding liquid, whereas the sledge falls upon a solid substance, unyielding and unelastic. The shaking and jolting which result may readily be imagined.

There are other discomforts, too, in winter travelling. So long as the air is perfectly still, the

cold may be very intense without being disagreeable; but if a strong head wind is blowing, and the thermometer ever so many degrees below zero, driving in an open sledge is a very disagreeable operation, and noses may get frostbitten without their owners perceiving the fact in time to take preventive measures. Then why not take covered sledges on such occasions? For the simple reason that they are not to be had; and if they could be procured, it would be well to avoid using them, for they are apt to produce something very like sea-sickness. Besides this, when the sledge gets overturned, it is pleasanter to be shot out on to the clean, refreshing snow than to be buried ignominiously under a pile of miscellaneous baggage.

The chief requisite for winter travelling in these icy regions is a plentiful supply of warm furs. An Englishman is very apt to be imprudent in this respect, and to trust too much to his natural power of resisting cold. To a certain extent this confidence is justifiable, for an Englishman often feels quite comfortable in an ordinary great coat, when his Russian friends consider it necessary to envelope themselves in furs of the warmest kind; but it may be carried too far, in which case severe punishment is sure to follow, as I once learned by experience. I may relate the incident as a warning to others.

One day in mid-winter I started from Novgorod, with the intention of visiting some friends at a cavalry barracks situated about ten miles from the town. As the sun was shining brightly, and the distance to be traversed was short, I considered that a light fur and a *bashlyk*—a cloth hood which protects the ears—would be quite sufficient to keep out the cold, and foolishly disregarded the warnings of a Russian friend who happened to call as I was about to start. Our route lay along the river due northward, right in the teeth

of a strong north wind. A wintry north wind is always and everywhere a disagreeable enemy to face; let the reader try to imagine what it is when the Fahrenheit thermometer is at 30° below zero—or rather let him refrain from such an attempt, for the sensation produced cannot be imagined by those who have not experienced it. Of course I ought to have turned back—at least, as soon as a sensation of faintness warned me that the circulation was being seriously impeded—but I did not wish to confess my imprudence to the friend who accompanied me. When we had driven about three-fourths of the way, we met a peasant woman, who gesticulated violently, and shouted something to us as we passed. I did not hear what she said, but my friend turned to me and said in an alarming tone—we had been speaking German—"Mein Gott! Ihre Nase ist abgefrohren!" Now the word "*ab*gefrohren," as the reader will understand, seemed to indicate that my nose was frozen *off*, so I put up my hand in some alarm to discover whether I had inadvertently lost the whole or part of the member referred to. It was still *in situ* and entire, but as hard and insensible as a bit of wood.

"You may still save it," said my companion, "if you get out at once and rub it vigorously with snow."

I got out as directed, but was too faint to do anything vigorously. My fur cloak flew open, the cold seemed to grasp me in the region of the heart, and I fell insensible.

How long I remained unconscious I know not. When I awoke I found myself in a strange room, surrounded by dragoon officers in uniform, and the first words I heard were, "He is out of danger now, but he will have a fever."

These words were spoken, as I afterwards discovered, by a very competent surgeon; but the pro-

phecy was not fulfilled. The promised fever never came. The only bad consequences were that for some days my right hand remained stiff, and for a week or two I had to conceal my nose from public view.

If this little incident justifies me in drawing a general conclusion, I should say that exposure to extreme cold is an almost painless form of death; but that the process of being resuscitated is very painful indeed—so painful, that the patient may be excused for momentarily regretting that officious people prevented the temporary insensibility from becoming "the sleep that knows no waking."

Between the alternate reigns of winter and summer there is always a short interregnum, during which travelling in Russia by road is almost impossible. Woe to the ill-fated mortal who has to make a long road-journey immediately after the winter snow has melted; or, worse still, at the beginning of winter, when the autumn mud has been petrified by the frost, and not yet levelled by the snow!

At all seasons the monotony of a journey is pretty sure to be broken by little unforeseen episodes of a more or less disagreeable kind. An axle breaks, or a wheel comes off, or there is a difficulty in procuring horses. As an illustration of the graver episodes which may occur, I shall make here a quotation from my note-book:

Early in the morning we arrived at Maikop, a small town commanding the entrance to one of the valleys which run up towards the main range of the Caucasus. On alighting at the post-station, we at once ordered horses for the next stage, and received the laconic reply, "There are no horses."

"And when will there be some?"

"To-morrow!"

This last reply we took for a piece of playful

exaggeration, and demanded the book in which, according to law, the departure of horses is duly inscribed, and from which it is easy to calculate when the first team should be ready to start. A short calculation proved that we ought to get horses by four o'clock in the afternoon, so we showed the station-keeper various documents, signed by the Minister of the Interior and other influential personages, and advised him to avoid all contravention of the postal regulations.

These documents, which proved that we enjoyed the special protection of the authorities, had generally been of great service to us in our dealings with rascally station-keepers; but this station-keeper was not one of the ordinary type. He was a Cossack, of herculean proportions, with a bullet-shaped head, short-cropped bristly hair, shaggy eyebrows, an enormous pendent moustache, a defiant air, and a peculiar expression of countenance which plainly indicated "an ugly customer." Though it was still early in the day, he had evidently already imbibed a considerable quantity of alcohol, and his whole demeanour showed clearly enough that he was not of those who are "pleasant in their liquor." After glancing superciliously at the documents, as if to intimate he could read them were he so disposed, he threw them down on the table, and, thrusting his gigantic paws into his capacious trouser-pockets, remarked slowly and decisively, in something deeper than a double-bass voice, "You'll have horses to-morrow morning."

Wishing to avoid a quarrel, we tried to hire horses in the village, and when our efforts in that direction proved fruitless, we applied to the head of the rural police. He came and used all his influence with the refractory post-master, but in vain. Hercules was not in a mood to listen to officials any more than to

ordinary mortals. At last, after considerable trouble to himself, our friend of the police contrived to find horses for us, and we contented ourselves with entering an account of the circumstances in the Complaint Book; but our difficulties were by no means at an end. As soon as Hercules perceived that we had obtained horses without his assistance, and that he had thereby lost his opportunity of blackmailing us, he offered us one of his own teams, and insisted on detaining us until we should cancel the complaint against him. This we refused to do, and our relations with him became what is called in diplomatic language "extrêmement tendues." Again we had to apply to the police.

My friend mounted guard over the baggage whilst I went to the police office. I was not long absent, but I found, on my return, that important events had taken place in the interval. A crowd had collected round the post-station, and on the steps stood the keeper and his postboys, declaring that the traveller inside had attempted to shoot them! I rushed in and soon perceived, by the smell of gunpowder, that firearms had been used, but found no trace of casualties. My friend was tramping up and down the little room, and evidently, for the moment, there was an armistice.

In a very short time the local authorities had assembled, a candle had been lit, two armed Cossacks stood as sentries at the door, and the preliminary investigation had begun. The Chief of Police sat at the table and wrote rapidly on a sheet of foolscap. The investigation showed that two shots had been fired from a revolver, and two bullets were found imbedded in the wall. All those who had been present, and some who knew nothing of the incident except by hearsay, were duly examined. Our opponents always assumed that my friend had been the

assailant, in spite of his protestations to the contrary, and more than once the words *pokushenié na ubiïstvo* (attempt to murder) were pronounced. Things looked very black indeed. We had the prospect of being detained for days and weeks in the miserable place, till the insatiable demon of official formality had been propitiated. And then?

When things were thus at their blackest they suddenly took an unexpected turn, and the *deus ex machinâ* appeared precisely at the right moment, just as if we had all been puppets in a sensation novel. There was the usual momentary silence, and then, mixed with the sound of an approaching *tarantass*, a confused murmur: "There he is! He is coming!" The "he" thus vaguely and mysteriously indicated turned out to be an official of the judicial administration, who had reason to visit the village for an entirely different affair. As soon as he had been told briefly what had happened he took the matter in hand and showed himself equal to the occasion. Unlike the majority of Russian officials he disliked lengthy procedure, and succeeded in making the case quite clear in a very short time. There had been, he perceived, no attempt to murder or anything of the kind. The station-keeper and his two postboys, who had no right to be in the travellers' room, had entered with threatening mien, and when they refused to retire peaceably, my friend had fired two shots in order to frighten them and bring assistance. The falsity of their statement that he had fired at them as they entered the room was proved by the fact that the bullets were lodged near the ceiling in the wall farthest away from the door.

I must confess that I was agreeably surprised by this unexpected turn of affairs. The conclusions arrived at were nothing more than a simple statement

of what had taken place; but I was surprised at the fact that a man who was at once a lawyer and a Russian official should have been able to take such a plain, common-sense view of the case.

Before midnight we were once more free men, driving rapidly in the clear moonlight to the next station, under the escort of a fully-armed Circassian Cossack; but the idea that we might have been detained for weeks in that miserable place haunted us like a nightmare.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE NORTHERN FORESTS.

Bird's-eye View of Russia—The Northern Forests—Purpose of my Journey—Negotiations—The Road—A Village—A Peasant's House—Vapour-Baths—A Curious Custom—Arrival.

THERE are many ways of describing a country that one has visited. The simplest and most common method is to give a chronological account of the journey; and this is perhaps the best way when the journey does not extend over more than a few weeks. But it cannot be conveniently employed in the case of a residence of many years. Did I adopt it, I should very soon exhaust the reader's patience. I should have to take him with me to a secluded village, and make him wait for me till I had learned to speak the language. Thence he would have to accompany me to a provincial town, and spend months in a public office, whilst I endeavoured to master the mysteries of local self-government. After this he would have to spend two years with me in a big library, where I studied the history and literature of the country... And so on, and so on. Even my journeys would prove tedious to him, as they often were to myself, for he would have to drive with me many a score of weary miles, where even the most zealous diary writer would find nothing to record beyond the names of the post-stations.

It will be well for me, then, to avoid the strictly chronological method, and confine myself to a description of the more striking objects and incidents that came under my notice. The knowledge which I

derived from books will help me to supply a running commentary on what I happened to see and hear.

Instead of beginning in the usual way with St. Petersburg, I prefer for many reasons to leave the description of the capital till some future time, and plunge at once into the great northern forest region.

If it were possible to get a bird's-eye view of European Russia, the spectator would preceive that the country is composed of two halves, widely differing from each other in character. The northern half is a land of forest and morass, plentifully supplied with water in the form of rivers, lakes, and marshes, and broken up by numerous patches of cultivation. The southern half is, as it were, the other side of the pattern—an immense expanse of rich arable land, broken up by occasional patches of sand or forest. The imaginary undulating line separating those two regions starts from the western frontier about the 50th parallel of latitude, and runs in a north-easterly direction till it enters the Ural range at about 56° N.L.

Well do I remember my first experience of travel in the northern region, and the weeks of voluntary exile which formed the goal of the journey. It was in the summer of 1870. My reason for undertaking the journey was this: a few months of life in St. Petersburg had fully convinced me that the Russian language is one of those things which can only be acquired by practice, and that even a person of antediluvian longevity might spend all his life in that city without learning to express himself fluently in the vernacular—especially if he has the misfortune of being able to speak English, French, and German. With his friends and associates he speaks French or English. German serves as a medium of communication with waiters, shopkeepers, and other people of

that class. It is only with *isvoshtchiki*—the drivers of the little open droshkis which fulfil the function of cabs—that he is obliged to use the native tongue, and with them a very limited vocabulary suffices. The ordinal numerals and four short, easily-acquired expressions—*poshól* (go on), *na právo* (to the right), *na lyévo* (to the left), and *stoi* (stop)—are all that is required.

Whilst I was considering how I could get beyond the sphere of West-European languages, a friend came to my assistance, and suggested that I should go to his estate in the province of Novgorod, where I should find an intelligent, amiable parish priest, quite innocent of any linguistic acquirements. This proposal I at once adopted, and accordingly found myself one morning at a small station of the Moscow Railway, endeavouring to explain to a peasant in sheep's clothing that I wished to be conveyed to Ivánofka, the village where my future teacher lived. At that time I still spoke Russian in a very fragmentary and confused way—pretty much as Spanish cows are popularly supposed to speak French. My first remark, therefore, being literally interpreted, was, "Ivánofka. Horses. You can?" The point of interrogation was expressed by a simultaneous raising of the voice and the eyebrows.

"Ivánofka?" cried the peasant, in an interrogatory tone of voice. In Russia, as in other countries, the peasantry when speaking with strangers like to repeat questions, apparently for the purpose of gaining time.

"Ivánofka," I replied.

"Now?"

"Now!"

After some reflection the peasant nodded and said something which I did not understand, but which I

assumed to mean that he was open to consider proposals for transporting me to my destination.

"Roubles. How many?"

To judge by the knitting of the brows and the scratching of the head, I should say that that question gave occasion to a very abstruse mathematical calculation. Gradually the look of concentrated attention gave place to an expression such as children assume when they endeavour to get a parental decision reversed by means of coaxing. Then came a stream of soft words which were to me utterly unintelligible.

I must not weary the reader with a detailed account of the succeeding negotiations, which were conducted with extreme diplomatic caution on both sides, as if a cession of territory or the payment of a war-indemnity had been the subject of discussion. Three times he drove away and three times returned. Each time he abated his pretensions, and each time I slightly increased my offer. At last, when I began to fear that he had finally taken his departure and had left me to my own devices, he re-entered the room and took up my baggage, indicating thereby that he agreed to my last offer.

The sum agreed upon would have been, under ordinary circumstances, more than sufficient, but before proceeding far I discovered that the circumstances were by no means ordinary, and I began to understand the pantomimic gesticulation which had puzzled me during the negotiations. Heavy rain had fallen without interruption for several days, and now the track on which we were travelling could not, without poetical license, be described as a road. In some parts it resembled a water-course, in others a quagmire, and at least during the first half of the journey I was constantly reminded of that stage in the work of creation when the water was not yet separated from the

dry land. During the few moments when the work of keeping my balance and preventing my baggage from being lost did not engross all my attention, I speculated on the possibility of inventing a boat-carriage, to be drawn by some amphibious quadruped. Fortunately our two lean, wiry little horses did not object to being used as aquatic animals. They took the water bravely, and plunged through the mud in gallant style. The *teléga* in which we were seated—a four-wheeled skeleton cart—did not submit to the illtreatment so silently. It creaked out its remonstrances and entreaties, and at the more difficult spots threatened to go to pieces; but its owner understood its character and capabilities, and paid no attention to its ominous threats. Once, indeed, a wheel came off, but it was soon fished out of the mud and replaced, and no further casualty occurred.

The horses did their work so well that when about mid-day we arrived at a village, I could not refuse to let them have some rest and refreshment—all the more as my own thoughts had begun to turn in that direction.

The village, like villages in that part of the country generally, consisted of two long parallel rows of wooden houses. The road—if a stratum of deep mud can be called by that name—formed the intervening space. All the houses turned their gables to the passer-by, and some of them had pretensions to architectural decoration in the form of rude perforated woodwork. Between the houses, and in a line with them, were great wooden gates and high wooden fences, separating the courtyards from the road. Into one of these yards, near the farther end of the village, our horses turned of their own accord.

"An inn?" I said, in an interrogative tone.

The driver shook his head and said something,

in which I detected the word "friend." Evidently there was no hostelry for man and beast in the village, and the driver was using a friend's house for the purpose.

The yard was flanked on the one side by an open shed, containing rude agricultural implements which might throw some light on the agriculture of the primitive Aryans, and on the other side by the dwelling-house and stable. Both the house and stable were built of logs, nearly cylindrical in form, and placed in horizontal tiers.

Two of the strongest of human motives, hunger and curiosity, impelled me to enter the house at once. Without waiting for an invitation, I went up to the door—half protected against the winter snows by a small open portico—and unceremoniously walked in. The first apartment was empty, but I noticed a low door in the wall to the left, and passing through this, entered the principal room. As the scene was new to me, I noted the principal objects. In the wall before me were two small square windows looking out upon the road, and in the corner to the right, nearer to the ceiling than to the floor, was a little triangular shelf, on which stood a religious picture. Before the picture hung a curious oil lamp. In the corner to the left of the door was a gigantic stove, built of brick, and whitewashed. From the top of the stove to the wall on the right stretched what might be called an enormous shelf, six or eight feet in breadth. This is the so-called *paláti*, as I afterwards discovered, and serves as a bed for part of the family. The furniture consisted of a long wooden bench attached to the wall on the right, a big, heavy deal table, and a few wooden stools.

Whilst I was leisurely surveying these objects, I heard a noise on the top of the stove, and, looking up,

perceived a human face, with long hair parted in the middle, and a full yellow beard. I was considerably astonished by this apparition, for the air in the room was stifling, and I had some difficulty in believing that any created being—except perhaps a salamander or a negro—could exist in such a position. I looked hard to convince myself that I was not the victim of a delusion. As I stared, the head nodded slowly and pronounced the customary form of greeting.

I returned the greeting slowly, wondering what was to come next.

"Ill, very ill!" sighed the head.

"I'm not astonished at that," I remarked, in an "aside." "If I were lying on the stove as you are I should be very ill too."

"Hot, very hot?" I remarked, interrogatively.

"Nitchevo"—that is to say, "not particularly." This remark astonished me all the more as I noticed that the body to which the head belonged was enveloped in a sheepskin!

After living some time in Russia I was no longer surprised by such incidents, for I soon discovered that the Russian peasant has a marvellous power of bearing extreme heat as well as extreme cold. When a coachman takes his master or mistress to the theatre or to a party, he never thinks of going home and returning at an appointed time. Hour after hour he sits placidly on the box, and though the cold be of an intensity such as is never experienced in our temperate climate, he can sleep as tranquilly as the *lazzarone* at mid-day in Naples. In that respect the Russian peasant seems to be first-cousin to the polar bear, but, unlike the animals of the arctic regions, he is not at all incommoded by excessive heat. On the contrary, he likes it when he can get it, and never omits an opportunity of laying in a reserve supply of caloric. He even

delights in rapid transitions from one extreme to the other, as is amply proved by a curious custom which deserves to be recorded.

The reader must know that in the life of the Russian peasantry the weekly vapour-bath plays a most important part. It has even a certain religious signification, for no good orthodox peasant would dare to enter a church after being soiled by certain kinds of pollution without cleansing himself physically and morally by means of the bath. In the weekly arrangements it forms the occupation for Saturday afternoon, and care is taken to avoid thereafter all pollution until after the morning service on Sunday. Many villages possess a public or communal bath of the most primitive construction, but in some parts of the country—I am not sure how far the practice extends—the peasants take their vapour-bath in the household oven in which the bread is baked! In all cases the operation is pushed to the extreme limit of human endurance—far beyond the utmost limit that can be endured by those who have not been accustomed to it from childhood. For my own part, I only made the experiment once; and when I informed my attendant that my life was in danger from congestion of the brain, he laughed outright, and told me that the operation had only begun. Most astounding of all—and this brings me to the fact which led me into this digression—the peasants in winter often rush out of the bath and roll themselves in the snow! This aptly illustrates a common Russian proverb, which says that what is health to the Russian is death to the German.

Cold water, as well as hot vapour, is sometimes used as a means of purification. In the villages the old pagan habit of masquerading in absurd costumes at certain seasons—as is done during the carnival in Roman Catholic countries with the approval, or at

least connivance, of the Church—still survives; but it is regarded as not altogether sinless. He who uses such disguises places himself to a certain extent under the influence of the Evil One, thereby putting his soul in jeopardy; and to free himself from this danger he has to purify himself in the following way: When the annual mid-winter ceremony of blessing the waters is performed, by breaking a hole in the ice and immersing a cross with certain religious rites, he should plunge into the hole as soon as possible after the ceremony. I remember once at Yaroslavl, on the Volga, two young peasants successfully accomplished this feat—though the police have orders to prevent it—and escaped, apparently without evil consequences, though the Fahrenheit thermometer was below zero. How far the custom has really a purifying influence, is a question which must be left to theologians; but even an ordinary mortal can understand that, if it be regarded as a penance, it must have a certain deterrent effect. The man who foresees the necessity of undergoing this severe penance will think twice before putting on a disguise. So at least it must have been in the good old times; but in these degenerate days—among the Russian peasantry as elsewhere—the fear of the Devil, which was formerly, if not the beginning, at least one of the essential elements of wisdom, has greatly decreased. Many a young peasant will now thoughtlessly disguise himself, and when the consecration of the water is performed, will stand and look on passively like an ordinary spectator! It would seem that the Devil, like his enemy the Pope, is destined to lose gradually his temporal power.

But all this time I am neglecting my new acquaintance on the top of the stove. In reality I did not neglect him, but listened most attentively to every word of the long tale that he recited. What it was

all about I could only vaguely guess, for I did not understand more than ten per cent. of the words used, but I assumed from the tone and gestures that he was relating to me all the incidents and symptoms of his illness. And a very severe illness it must have been, for it requires a very considerable amount of physical suffering to make the patient Russian peasant groan. Before he had finished his tale a woman entered, apparently his wife. To her I explained that I had a strong desire to eat and drink, and that I wished to know what she could give me. By a good deal of laborious explanation I was made to understand that I could have eggs, black bread, and milk, and we agreed that there should be a division of labour: my hostess should prepare the samovar for boiling water, whilst I should fry the eggs to my own satisfaction.

In a few minutes the repast was ready, and, though not very delicate, was highly acceptable. The tea and sugar I had of course brought with me; the eggs were not very highly flavoured; and the black rye-bread, strongly intermixed with sand, could be eaten by a peculiar and easily-acquired method of mastication, in which the upper molars are never allowed to touch those of the lower jaw. In this way the grating of the sand between the teeth is avoided.

Eggs, black bread, milk, and tea—these formed my ordinary articles of food during all my wanderings in Northern Russia. Occasionally potatoes could be got, and afforded the possibility of varying the bill of fare. The favourite materials employed in the native cookery are sour cabbage, cucumbers, and *kvass*—a kind of very small beer made from black bread. None of these can be recommended to the traveller who is not already accustomed to them.

The remainder of the journey was accomplished at a rather more rapid pace than the preceding part, for

the road was decidedly better, though it was traversed by numerous half-buried roots, which produced violent jolts. From the conversation of the driver I gathered that wolves, bears, and elks were found in the forest through which we were passing.

The sun had long since set when we reached our destination, and I found to my dismay that the priest's house was closed for the night. To rouse the reverend personage from his slumbers, and endeavour to explain to him with my limited vocabulary the object of my visit, was not to be thought of. On the other hand, there was no inn of any kind in the vicinity. When I consulted the driver as to what was to be done, he meditated for a little, and then pointed to a large house at some distance where there were still lights. It turned out to be the country-house of the gentleman who had advised me to undertake the journey, and here, after a short explanation, though the owner was not at home, I was hospitably received.

It had been my intention to live in the priest's house, but a short interview with him on the following day convinced me that that part of my plan could not be carried out. The preliminary objections that I should find but poor fare in his humble household, and much more of the same kind, were at once put aside by my assurance, made partly by pantomime, that, as an old traveller, I was well accustomed to simple fare, and could always accommodate myself to the habits of people among whom my lot happened to be cast. But there was a more serious difficulty. The priest's family had, as is generally the case with priests' families, been rapidly increasing during the last few years, and his house had not been growing with equal rapidity. The natural consequence of this was that he had not a room or a bed to spare. The little room which he had formerly kept for occasional visitors was

now occupied by his eldest daughter, who had returned from a "school for the daughters of the clergy," where she had been for the last two years. Under these circumstances, I was constrained to accept the kind proposal made to me by the representative of my absent friend, that I should take up my quarters in one of the numerous unoccupied rooms in the manor house. This arrangement, I was reminded, would not at all interfere with my proposed studies, for the priest lived close at hand, and I might spend with him as much time as I liked.

And now let me introduce the reader to my reverend teacher, and one or two other personages whose acquaintance I made during my voluntary exile.

CHAPTER III.

VOLUNTARY EXILE.

Ivánofka—History of the Place—The Steward of the Estate—Slav and Teutonic Natures—A German's View of the Emancipation—Justices of the Peace—New School of Morals—The Russian Language—Linguistic Talent of the Russians—My Teacher—A Big Dose of Current History.

THIS village, Ivánofka by name, in which I proposed to spend some months, was rather more picturesque than villages in these northern forests commonly are. The peasants' huts, built on both sides of a straight road, were colourless enough, and the big church, with its five pear-shaped cupolas rising out of the bright green roof and its ugly belfry in the Renaissance style, was not by any means beautiful in itself; but when seen from a little distance, especially in the soft evening twilight, the whole might have been made the subject of a very pleasing picture. From the point that a landscape-painter would naturally have chosen, the foreground was formed by a meadow, through which flowed sluggishly a meandering stream. On a bit of rising ground to the right, and half concealed by an intervening cluster of old rich-coloured pines, stood the manor house—a box-shaped, whitewashed building, with a verandah in front, overlooking a small plot that might some day become a flower garden. To the left of this stood the village, the houses grouping prettily with the big church, and a little farther in this direction was an avenue of graceful birches. On the extreme left were fields, bounded by a dark border of fir-trees. Could the spectator have raised himself a few hundred feet from the ground, he would

have seen that there were fields beyond the village, and that the whole of this agricultural oasis was imbedded in a forest stretching in all directions as far as the eye could reach.

The history of the place may be told in a few words. In former times the estate, including the village and all its inhabitants, had belonged to a monastery, but when, in 1764, the Church lands were secularised by Catherine II., it became the property of the State. Some years afterwards the Empress granted it, with the serfs and everything else which it contained, to an old general who had distinguished himself in the Turkish wars. From that time it had remained in the K—— family. Some time between the years 1820 and 1840, the big church and the mansion house had been built by the actual possessor's father, who loved country life, and devoted a large part of his time and energies to the management of his estate. His son, on the contrary, preferred St. Petersburg to the country, served in one of the public offices, loved passionately French plays and other products of urban civilisation, and left the entire management of the property to a German steward, popularly known as Karl Karl'itch, whom I shall introduce to the reader presently.

The village annals contained no important events, except bad harvests, cattle plagues, and destructive fires, with which the inhabitants seem to have been periodically visited from time immemorial. If good harvests were ever experienced, they must have faded from the popular recollection. Then there were certain ancient traditions which might have been lessened in bulk and improved in quality by being subjected to searching historical criticism. More than once, for instance, a *leshie*, or wood-sprite, had been seen in the neighbourhood; and in several households the *domovoi*,

or brownie, had been known to play strange pranks until he was properly propitiated. And as a set-off against these manifestations of evil powers, there were well-authenticated stories about a miracle-working image that had mysteriously appeared on the branch of a tree, and about numerous miraculous cures that had been effected by means of pilgrimages to holy shrines.

But it is time to introduce the principal personages of this little community. Of these, by far the most important was Karl Karl'itch, the steward.

First of all I ought, perhaps, to explain how Karl Schmidt, the son of a well-to-do *Bauer* in the Prussian village of Schönhausen, became Karl Karl'itch, the principal personage in the Russian village of Ivánofka.

About the time of the Crimean War, many of the Russian landed proprietors had become alive to the necessity of improving the primitive, traditional methods of agriculture, and sought for this purpose German stewards for their estates. Among these proprietors was the owner of Ivánofka. Through the medium of a friend in Berlin, he succeeded in engaging for a moderate salary a young man who had just finished his studies in one of the German schools of agriculture —the institution at Hohenheim, if my memory does not deceive me. This young man had arrived in Russia as plain Karl Schmidt, but his name was soon transformed into Karl Karl'itch, not from any desire of his own, but in accordance with a curious Russian custom. In Russia, one usually calls a man not by his family name, but by his Christian name and patronymic—the latter being formed from the name of his father. Thus, if a man's name is Nicholas, and his father's Christian name is—or was—Ivan, you address him as Nikolaï Ivánovitch (pronounced Iván-'itch); and if this man should happen to have a sister

called Mary, you will address her—even though she should be married—as Marya Ivánovna (pronounced Ivanna).

Immediately on his arrival, young Schmidt had set himself vigorously to reorganise the estate and improve the method of agriculture. Some ploughs, harrows, and other implements which had been imported at a former period were dragged out of the obscurity in which they had lain for several years, and an attempt was made to farm on scientific principles. The attempt was far from being completely successful, for the serfs —this was before the Emancipation—could not be made to work like regularly trained German labourers. In spite of all admonitions, threats, and punishments, they persisted in working slowly, listlessly, inaccurately, and occasionally they broke the new instruments, from carelessness or some more culpable motive. Karl Karl'itch was not naturally a hard-hearted man, but he was very rigid in his notions of duty, and could be cruelly severe when his orders were not executed with an accuracy and punctuality that seemed to the Russian rustic mind mere useless pedantry. The serfs did not offer him any open opposition, and were always obsequiously respectful in their demeanour towards him, but they invariably frustrated his plans by their carelessness and stolid, passive resistance.

Thus arose that silent conflict and that smouldering mutual enmity which almost always result from the contact of the Teuton with the Slav. The serfs instinctively regretted the good old times, when they lived under the rough-and-ready patriarchal rule of their masters, assisted by a native *burmister*, or overseer, who was one of themselves. The *burmister* had not always been honest in his dealings with them, and the master had often, when in

anger, ordered severe punishments to be inflicted; but the *burmister* had not attempted to make them change their old habits, and had shut his eyes to many little sins of omission and commission, whilst the master was always ready to assist them in difficulties, and commonly treated them in a kindly, familiar way. As the old Russian proverb has it, "Where anger is, there too is kindly forgiveness." Karl Karl'itch, on the contrary, was the personification of uncompassionate, inflexible law. Blind rage and compassionate kindliness were alike foreign to his system of government. If he had any feeling towards the serfs, it was one of chronic contempt. The word *durák* (blockhead) was constantly on his lips, and when any bit of work was well done, he took it as a matter of course, and never thought of giving a word of approval or encouragement.

When it became evident, in 1859, that the emancipation of the serfs was at hand, Karl Karl'itch confidently predicted that the country would inevitably go to ruin. He knew by experience that the peasants were lazy and improvident, even when they lived under the tutelage of a master, and with the fear of the rod before their eyes. What would they become when this guidance and salutary restraint would be removed? The prospect raised terrible forebodings in the mind of the worthy steward, who had his employer's interests really at heart; and these forebodings were considerably increased and intensified when he learned that the peasants were to receive by law the land which they occupied on sufferance, and which comprised about a half of the whole arable land of the estate. This arrangement he declared to be a dangerous and unjustifiable infraction of the sacred rights of property, which savoured strongly of communism, and could

have but one practical result: the emancipated peasants would live by the cultivation of their own land, and would not consent on any terms to work for their former master.

In the few months which immediately followed the publication of the Emancipation Edict in 1861, Karl Karl'itch found much to confirm his most gloomy apprehensions. The peasants showed themselves dissatisfied with the privileges conferred upon them, and sought to evade the corresponding duties imposed on them by the new law. In vain he endeavoured, by exhortations, promises, and threats, to get the most necessary part of the field-work done, and showed the peasants the provision of the law enjoining them to obey and work as of old until some new arrangement should be made. To all his appeals they replied that, having been freed by the Tsar, they were no longer obliged to work for their former master; and he was at last forced to appeal to the authorities. This step had a certain effect, but the field-work was executed that year even worse than usual, and the harvest suffered in consequence.

Since that time things had gradually improved. The peasants had discovered that they could not support themselves and pay their taxes from the land ceded to them, and had accordingly consented to till the proprietor's fields for a moderate recompense. "These last two years," said Karl Karl'itch to me, with an air of honest self-satisfaction, "I have been able, after paying all expenses, to transmit little sums to the young master in St. Petersburg. It was certainly not much, but it shows that things are better than they were. Still, it is hard, uphill work. The peasants have not been improved by liberty. They now work less and drink more than they did in the times of serfage, and if you say a word to them

they'll go away, and not work for you at all." Here Karl Karl'itch indemnified himself for his recent self-control in the presence of his workers by using a series of the strongest epithets which the combined languages of his native and of his adopted country could supply. "But laziness and drunkenness are not their only faults. They let their cattle wander into our fields, and never lose an opportunity of stealing firewood from the forest."

"But you have now for such matters the rural justices of the peace," I ventured to suggest.

"The justices of the peace!" . . . . . Here Karl Karl'itch used an inelegant expression, which showed plainly that he was no unqualified admirer of the new judicial institutions. "What is the use of applying to the justices? The nearest one lives six miles off, and when I go to him he evidently tries to make me lose as much time as possible. I am sure to lose nearly a whole day, and at the end of it I may find that I have got nothing for my pains. These justices always try to find some excuse for the peasant, and when they do condemn, by way of exception, the affair does not end there. There is pretty sure to be a pettifogging practitioner prowling about—some rascally scribe who has been dismissed from the public offices for pilfering and extorting too openly—and he is always ready to whisper to the peasant that he should appeal. The peasant knows that the decision is just, but he is easily persuaded that by appealing to the Monthly Sessions he gets another chance in the lottery, and may perhaps draw a prize. He lets the rascally scribe, therefore, prepare an appeal for him, and I receive an invitation to attend the Session of Justices in the district town on a certain day.

"It is a good five-and-thirty miles to the district

town, as you know, but I get up early, and arrive at eleven o'clock, the hour stated in the official notice. A crowd of peasants are hanging about the door of the court, but the only official present is the porter. I enquire of him when my case is likely to come on, and receive the laconic answer, 'How should I know?' After half an hour the secretary arrives. I repeat my question, and receive the same answer. Another half hour passes, and one of the justices drives up in his *tarantass*. Perhaps he is a glib-tongued gentleman, and assures me that the proceedings will commence at once: 'Sei tchas! sei tchas!' Don't believe what the priest or the dictionary tells you about the meaning of that expression. The dictionary will tell you that it means 'immediately,' but that's all nonsense. In the mouth of a Russian it means 'in an hour,' 'next week,' 'in a year or two,' 'never'—most commonly 'never.' Like many other words in Russian, 'sei tchas' can be understood only after long experience. A second justice drives up, and then a third. No more are required by law, but these gentlemen must first smoke several cigarettes and discuss all the local news before they begin work.

"At last they take their seats on the bench—a slightly elevated platform at one end of the room, behind a table covered with green baize—and the proceedings commence. My case is sure to be pretty far down on the list—the secretary takes, I believe, a malicious pleasure in watching my impatience—and before it is called the justices have to retire at least once for refreshments and cigarettes. I have to amuse myself by listening to the other cases, and some of them, I can assure you, are amusing enough. The walls of that room must be by this time pretty well saturated with perjury, and many of the

witnesses catch at once the infection. Perhaps I may tell you some other time a few of the amusing incidents that I have seen there. At last my case is called. It is as clear as daylight, but the rascally pettifogger is there with a long, prepared speech. He holds in his hand a small volume of the codified law, and quotes paragraphs which no amount of human ingenuity can make to bear upon the subject. Perhaps the previous decision is confirmed; perhaps it is reversed; in either case, I have lost a second day and exhausted more patience than I can conveniently spare. And something even worse may happen, as I know by experience. Once during a case of mine there was some little informality—someone inadvertently opened the door of the consulting-room when the decision was being written, or some other little incident of the sort occurred, and the rascally pettifogger complained to the Supreme Court of Revision, which is a part of the Senate. The case was all about a few roubles, but it was discussed in St. Petersburg, and afterwards tried over again by another court of justices. Now I have paid my *Lehrgeld*, and go no more to law."

"Then you must expose yourself to all kinds of extortion?"

"Not so much as you might imagine. I have my own way of dispensing justice. When I catch a peasant's horse or cow in our fields, I lock it up and make the owner pay a ransom."

"Is it not rather dangerous," I inquired, "to take the law thus into your own hands? I have heard that the Russian justices are extremely severe against anyone who has recourse to what your German jurists call *Selbsthülfe*."

"That they are! So long as you are in Russia, you had much better let yourself be quietly robbed

than use any violence against the robber. It is less trouble, and it is cheaper in the long run. If you do not, you may unexpectedly find yourself some fine morning in prison! You must know that many of the young justices belong to the new school of morals."

"What is that? I have not heard of any new discoveries lately in the sphere of speculative ethics."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I am not one of the initiated, and I can only tell you what I hear. So far as I have noticed, the representatives of the new doctrine talk chiefly about *Gumannost'* and *Tchelovetcheskoe dostoinstvo*. You know what these words mean?"

"Humanity, or rather humanitarianism and human dignity," I replied, not sorry to give a proof that I was advancing in my studies.

"There, again, you allow your dictionary and your priest to mislead you. These terms, when used by a Russian, cover much more than we understand by them, and those who use them most frequently have generally a special tenderness for all kinds of malefactors. In the old times malefactors were popularly believed to be bad, dangerous people; but it has been lately discovered that this is a delusion. A young proprietor who lives not far off assures me that they are the true Protestants, and the most powerful social reformers! They protest practically against those imperfections of social organisation of which they are the involuntary victims. The feeble, characterless man quietly submits to his chains; the bold, generous, strong man breaks his fetters, and helps others to do the same. A very ingenious defence of all kinds of rascality, isn't it?"

"Well, it is a theory that might certainly be

carried too far, and might easily lead to very inconvenient conclusions; but I am not sure that, theoretically speaking, it does not contain a certain element of truth. It ought at least to foster that charity which we are enjoined to practise towards all men. But perhaps 'all men' does not include publicans and sinners?"

On hearing these words, Karl Karl'itch turned to me, and every feature of his honest German face expressed the most undisguised astonishment. "Are you, too, a Nihilist?" he inquired, as soon as he had partially recovered his breath.

"I really don't know what a Nihilist is, but I may assure you that I am not an 'ist' of any kind. What is a Nihilist?"

"If you live long in Russia you'll learn that without my telling you. As I was saying, I am not at all afraid of the peasants citing me before the justice. They know better now. If they gave me too much trouble I could starve their cattle."

"Yes, when you catch them in your fields," I remarked, taking no notice of the abrupt turn which he had given to the conversation.

"I can do it without that. You must know that, by the Emancipation Law, the peasants received arable land, but they received little or no pasturage. I have the whip hand of them there!"

The remarks of Karl Karl'itch on men and things were to me always interesting, for he was a shrewd observer, and displayed occasionally a pleasant, dry humour. But I very soon discovered that his opinions were not to be accepted without reserve. His strong, inflexible Teutonic nature often prevented him from judging impartially. He had no sympathy with the men and the institutions around him, and consequently he was unable to see things from the inside.

The specks and blemishes on the surface he perceived clearly enough, but he had no knowledge of the secret, deep-rooted causes by which these specks and blemishes were produced. The simple fact that a man was a Russian satisfactorily accounted, in his opinion, for any kind of moral deformity; and his knowledge turned out to be by no means so extensive as I had at first supposed. Though he had been many years in the country, he knew very little about the life of the peasants beyond that small part of it which concerned directly his own interests and those of his employer. Of the communal organisation, domestic life, religious beliefs, ceremonial practices, and nomadic habits of his humble neighbours, he knew little, and the little he happened to know was far from accurate. In order to gain a knowledge of these matters it would be better, I perceived, to consult the priest, or, better still, the peasants themselves. But to do this it would be necessary to understand easily and speak fluently the colloquial language, and I was still very far from having acquired the requisite proficiency.

Even for one who possesses a natural facility for acquiring foreign tongues, the learning of Russian is by no means an easy task. Though it is essentially an Aryan language like our own, and contains only a slight intermixture of Tartar words—such as *bashlyk* (a hood), *kalpak* (a night-cap), *arbuz* (a water-melon) —it has certain sounds unknown to West-European ears, and difficult for West-European tongues, and its roots, though in great part derived from the same original stock as those of the Græco-Latin and Teutonic languages, are generally not at all easily recognised. As an illustration of this, take the Russian word *otéts*. Strange as it may at first sight appear, this word is merely another form of our word *father*, of the German *vater*, and of the French *père*. The

syllable *ets* is the ordinary Russian termination denoting the agent, corresponding to the English and German ending *er*, as we see in such words as—*kup-ets* (a buyer), *plov-ets* (a swimmer), and many others. The root *ot* is a mutilated form of *vot*, as we see in the word *otchina* (a paternal inheritance), which is frequently written *votchina*. Now *vot* is evidently the same root as the German *vat* in *Vater*, and the English *fath* in *father*. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

All this is simple enough, and goes to prove the fundamental identity, or rather the community of origin, of the Slav and Teutonic languages; but it will be readily understood that etymological analogies so carefully disguised are of little practical use in helping us to acquire a foreign tongue. Besides this, the grammatical forms and constructions in Russian are very peculiar, and present a great many strange irregularities. As an illustration of this we may take the future tense. The Russian verb has commonly a simple and a frequentative future. The latter is always regularly formed by means of an auxiliary with the infinitive, as in English, but the former is constructed in a variety of ways, for which no rule can be given, so that the simple future of each individual verb must be learned by a pure effort of memory. In many verbs it is formed by prefixing a preposition, but it is impossible to determine by rule which preposition should be used. Thus *idú* (I go) becomes *poidú; pishú* (I write) becomes *napishú; pyú* (I drink) becomes *vuipyu*, and so on.

Closely akin to the difficulties of pronunciation is the difficulty of accentuating the proper syllable. In this respect Russian is like Greek; you can rarely tell *à priori* on what syllable the accent falls. But it is more puzzling than Greek, for two reasons: firstly, it is not customary to print Russian with accents; and

secondly, no one has yet been able to lay down precise rules for the transposition of the accent in the various inflections of the same word. Of this latter peculiarity, let one illustration suffice. The word *ruká* (hand) has the accent on the last syllable, but in the accusative (*rúku*) the accent goes back to the first syllable. It must not, however, be assumed that in all words of this type a similar transposition takes place. The word *bedá* (misfortune), for instance, as well as very many others, always retains the accent on the last syllable.

These and many similar difficulties, which need not be here enumerated, can be mastered only by long practice. Serious as they are, they need not frighten any one who is in the habit of learning foreign tongues. The ear and the tongue gradually become familiar with the peculiarities of inflection and accentuation, and practice fulfils the same function as abstract rules.

It is commonly supposed that Russians have been endowed by Nature with a peculiar linguistic talent. Their own language, it is said, is so difficult that they have no difficulty in acquiring others. This common belief requires, as it seems to me, some explanation. That highly educated Russians are better linguists than the educated classes of Western Europe there can be no possible doubt, for they almost always speak French, and often English and German also. The question, however, is whether this is the result of a psychological peculiarity, or of other causes. Now, without venturing to deny the existence of a natural faculty, I should say that the other causes have at least exercised a powerful influence. Any Russian who wishes to be regarded as *civilisé* must possess at least one foreign language; and, as a consequence of this, the children of the upper classes are always taught at least French in their infancy. Many households comprise a

German nurse, a French tutor, and an English governess; and the children thus become accustomed from their earliest years to the use of these three languages. Besides this, Russian is phonetically very rich, and contains nearly all the sounds which are to be found in West-European tongues. Perhaps on the whole it would be well to apply here the Darwinian theory, and suppose that the Russian noblesse, having been obliged for several generations to acquire foreign languages, have gradually developed a hereditary polyglot talent.

Several circumstances concurred to assist me in my efforts, during my voluntary exile, to acquire at least such a knowledge of the language as would enable me to converse freely with the peasantry. In the first place, my reverend teacher was an agreeable, kindly, talkative man, who took a great delight in telling interminable stories, quite independently of any satisfaction which he might derive from the consciousness of their being understood and appreciated. Even when walking alone he was always muttering something to an imaginary listener. A stranger meeting him on such occasions might have supposed that he was holding converse with unseen spirits, though his broad muscular form and rubicund face militated strongly against such a supposition; but no man, woman, or child living within a radius of ten miles would ever have fallen into this mistake. Every one in the neighbourhood knew that "Bátushka" (papa), as he was familiarly called, was too prosaical, practical a man to see things ethereal, that he was an irrepressible talker, and that when he could not conveniently find an audience he created one by his own imagination. This peculiarity of his rendered me good service. Though for some time I understood very little of what he said, and very often misplaced the positive

and negative monosyllables which I hazarded occasionally by way of encouragement, he talked vigorously all the same. Like all garrulous people, he was constantly repeating himself; but to this I did not object, for the custom — however disagreeable in ordinary society—was for me highly beneficial, and when I had already heard a story once or twice before, it was much easier for me to assume at the proper moment the requisite expression of countenance.

Another fortunate circumstance was that at Ivánofka there were no distractions, so that the whole of the day and a great part of the night could be devoted to study. My chief amusement was an occasional walk in the fields with Karl Karl'itch; and even this mild form of dissipation could not always be obtained, for as soon as rain had fallen it was difficult to go beyond the verandah—the mud precluding the possibility of a constitutional. The nearest approach to excitement was mushroom-gathering; and in this occupation my inability to distinguish the edible from the poisonous species made my efforts unacceptable. We lived so "far from the madding crowd" that its din scarcely reached our ears. A week or ten days might pass without our receiving any intelligence from the outer world. The nearest post-office was in the district town, and with that distant point we had no regular system of communication. Letters and newspapers remained there till called for, and were brought to us intermittently when some one of our neighbours happened to pass that way. Current history was thus administered to us in big doses.

One very big dose I remember well. For a much longer time than usual no volunteer letter-carrier had appeared, and the delay was more than usually tantalising, because it was known that war had broken out between France and Germany. At last a big bundle

of a daily paper called the *Golos* was brought to me. Impatient to learn whether any great battle had been fought, I began by examining the latest number, and stumbled at once on an article headed, "Latest Intelligence: the Emperor at Wilhelmshöhe!!!" The large type in which the heading was printed and the three marks of exclamation showed plainly that the article was very important. I began to read with avidity, but was utterly mystified. What emperor was this? Probably the Tsar or the Emperor of Austria, for there was no German Emperor in those days. But no! It was evidently the Emperor of the French. And how did Napoleon get to Wilhelmshöhe? The French must have broken through the Rhine defences, and pushed far into Germany. But no! As I read further, I found this theory equally untenable. It turned out that the Emperor was surrounded by Germans, and—a prisoner! In order to solve the mystery, I had to go back to the preceding numbers of the paper, and learned, at a sitting, all about the successive German victories, the defeat and capitulation of Macmahon's army at Sedan, and the other great events of that momentous time. The impression produced can scarcely be realised by those who have always imbibed current history in the homœopathic doses administered by the morning and evening daily papers.

By the useful loquacity of my teacher and the possibility of devoting all my time to my linguistic studies, I made such rapid progress in the acquisition of the language that I was able after a few weeks to understand much of what was said to me, and to express myself in a vague, roundabout way. In the latter operation I was much assisted by a peculiar faculty of divination which the Russians possess in a high degree. If a foreigner succeeds in expressing

about one-fourth of an idea, the Russian peasant can generally fill up the remaining three-fourths from his own intuition.

As my powers of comprehension increased, my long conversations with the priest became more and more instructive. At first his remarks and stories had for me simply a philological interest, but gradually I perceived that his talk contained a great deal of solid, curious information regarding himself and the class to which he belonged—information of a kind not commonly found in grammatical exercises. Some of this I now propose to communicate to the reader.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE VILLAGE PRIEST.

Priests' Names—Clerical Marriages—The White and the Black Clergy—Why the People do not respect the arish Priests—History of the White Clergy—The Parish Priest and the Protestant Pastor—In what sense the Russian People are Religious—Icons—The Clergy and Popular Education—Ecclesiastical Reform—Premonitory Symptoms of Change—Two Typical Specimens of the Parochial Clergy of the Present Day.

In formal introductions it is customary to pronounce in a more or less inaudible voice the names of the two persons introduced. Circumstances compel me in the present case to depart from received custom. The truth is, I do not know the names of the two people whom I wish to bring together! The reader who knows his own name will readily pardon one-half of my ignorance, but he may naturally expect that I should know the name of a man with whom I profess to be acquainted, and with whom I daily held long conversations during a period of several months. Strange as it may seem, I do not. During all the time of my sojourn in Ivánofka I never heard him addressed or spoken of otherwise than as "Bátushka." Now "Bátushka" is not a name at all. It is simply the diminutive form of an obsolete word meaning "father," and is usually applied to all village priests. The *ushka* is a common diminutive termination, and the root *Bat* is evidently the same as that which appears in the Latin *pater*.

Though I do not happen to know what Bátushka's family name was, I can communicate two curious facts concerning it: he had not possessed it in his childhood, and it was not the same as his father's.

The reader whose intuitive powers have been preternaturally sharpened by a long course of sensation novels will probably leap to the conclusion that Bátushka was a mysterious individual, very different from what he seemed—either the illegitimate son of some great personage, or a man of high birth who had committed some great sin, and who now sought oblivion and expiation in the humble duties of a parish priest. Let me dispel at once all delusions of this kind. Bátushka was actually as well as legally the legitimate son of an ordinary parish priest, who was still living about twenty miles off, and for many generations all his paternal and maternal ancestors, male and female, had belonged to the priestly caste. He was thus a Levite of the purest water, and thoroughly Levitical in his character. Though he knew by experience something about the weakness of the flesh, he had never committed any sins of the heroic kind, and had no reason to conceal his origin. The curious facts above stated were simply the result of a peculiar custom which exists among the Russian clergy. According to this custom, when a boy enters the seminary he receives from the Bishop a new family name. The name may be Bogoslafski, from a word signifying "Theology," or Bogolubof, "the love of God," or some similar term; or it may be derived from the name of the boy's native village, or from any other word which the Bishop thinks fit to choose. I know of one instance where a Bishop chose two French words for the purpose. He had intended to call the boy Velikoselski, after his native place, Velikoe Seló, which means "big village;" but finding that there was already a Velikoselski in the seminary, and being in a facetious frame of mind, he called the newcomer Grandvillageski—a word that may perhaps sorely puzzle some philologist of the future.

My reverend teacher was a tall, muscular man of about forty years of age, with a full dark-brown beard, and long lank hair falling over his shoulders. The visible parts of his dress consisted of three articles—a dingy-brown robe of coarse material buttoned closely at the neck and descending to the ground, a wideawake hat, and a pair of large, heavy boots. As to the esoteric parts of his attire, I refrained from making investigations. His life had been an uneventful one. At an early age he had been sent to the seminary in the chief town of the province, and had made for himself the reputation of a good average scholar. "The seminary of that time," he used to say to me, referring to that part of his life, "was not what it is now. Nowadays the teachers talk about humanitarianism, and the boys would think that a crime had been committed against human dignity if one of them happened to be flogged. But they don't consider that human dignity is at all affected by their getting drunk, and going to—to—to places that I never went to. I was flogged often enough, and I don't think that I am a worse man on that account; and though I never heard then anything about pedagogical science that they talk so much about now, I'll read a bit of Latin yet with the best of them."

"When my studies were finished," said Bátushka, continuing the simple story of his life, "the Bishop found a wife for me, and I succeeded her father, who was then an old man. In that way I became priest of Ivánofka, and have remained here ever since. It is a hard life, for the parish is big, and my bit of land is not very fertile; but, praise be to God! I am healthy and strong, and get on well enough."

"You said that the Bishop found a wife for you," I remarked. "I suppose, therefore, that he was a great friend of yours."

"Not at all. The Bishop does the same for all the seminarists who wish to be ordained: it is an important part of his pastoral duties."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "Surely that is carrying the system of paternal government a little too far. Why should his Reverence meddle with things that don't concern him?"

"But these matters do concern him. He is the natural protector of widows and orphans, especially among the clergy of his own diocese. When a parish priest dies, what is to become of his wife and daughters?"

Not perceiving clearly the exact bearing of these last remarks, I ventured to suggest that priests ought to economise in view of future contingencies.

"It is easy to speak," replied Bátushka: "'A story is soon told,' as the old proverb has it, 'but a thing is not soon done.' How are we to economise? Even without saving we have the greatest difficulty to make the two ends meet."

"Then the widow and daughters might work and gain a livelihood."

"What, pray, could they work at?" asked Bátushka, and paused for a reply. Seeing that I had none to offer him, he continued, "Even the house and land belong not to them, but to the new priest."

"If that position occurred in a novel," I said, "I could foretell what would happen. The author would make the new priest fall in love with and marry one of the daughters, and then the whole family, including the mother-in-law, would live happily ever afterwards."

"That is exactly how the Bishop arranges the matter. What the novelist does with the puppets of his imagination, the Bishop does with real beings of flesh and blood. As a rational being he cannot leave

things to chance. Besides this, he must arrange the matter before the young man takes orders, because, by the rules of the Church, the marriage cannot take place after the ceremony of ordination. When the affair is arranged before the charge becomes vacant, the old priest can die with the pleasant consciousness that his family is provided for."

"Well, Bátushka, you certainly put the matter in a very plausible way, but there seem to be two flaws in the analogy. The novelist can make two people fall in love with each other, and make them live happily together with the mother-in-law, but that—with all due respect to his Reverence be it said—is beyond the power of a Bishop."

"I am not sure," said Bátushka, avoiding the point of the objection, "that love marriages are always the happiest ones; and as to the mother-in-law, there are—or at least there were until the emancipation of the serfs—a mother-in-law and several daughters-in-law in almost every peasant household."

"And does harmony generally reign in peasant households?"

"That depends upon the head of the house. If he is a man of the right sort, he can keep the women-folks in order." This remark was made in an energetic tone, with the evident intention of assuring me that the speaker was himself "a man of the right sort"; but I did not attribute much importance to it, for I have occasionally heard henpecked husbands talk in this grandiloquent way when their wives were out of hearing. Altogether I was by no means convinced that the system of providing for the widows and orphans of the clergy by means of *mariages de convenance* was a good one, but I determined to suspend my judgment until I should obtain fuller information

An additional bit of evidence came to me a week or two later. One morning, on going into the priest's house, I found that he had a friend with him—the priest of a village some fifteen miles off. Before we had got through the ordinary conventional remarks about the weather and the crops, a peasant drove up to the door in his cart with a message that an old peasant was dying in a neighbouring village, and desired the last consolations of religion. Bátushka was thus obliged to leave us, and his friend and I agreed to stroll leisurely in the direction of the village to which he was going, so as to meet him on his way home. The harvest was already finished, so that our road, after emerging from the village, lay through stubble-fields. Beyond this we entered the pine forest, and by the time we had reached this point I had succeeded in leading the conversation to the subject of clerical marriages.

"I have been thinking a good deal on this subject," I said, "and I should very much like to know your opinion about the system."

My new acquaintance was a tall, lean, black-haired man, with a sallow complexion and vinegar aspect—evidently one of those unhappy mortals who are intended by Nature to take a pessimistic view of all things, and to point out to their fellows the deep shadows of human life. I was not at all surprised, therefore, when he replied in a deep, decided tone, "Bad, very bad—utterly bad!"

The way in which these words were pronounced left no doubt as to the opinion of the speaker, but I was desirous of knowing on what that opinion was founded—more especially as I seemed to detect in the tone a note of personal grievance. My answer was shaped accordingly.

"I suspected that; but in the discussions which I

have had I have always been placed at a disadvantage, not being able to adduce any definite facts in support of my opinion."

"You may congratulate yourself on being unable to find any in your own experience. A mother-in-law living in the house does not conduce to domestic harmony. I don't know how it is in your country, but so it is with us."

I hastened to assure him that this was not a peculiarity of Russia.

"I know it only too well," he continued. "My mother-in-law lived with me for some years, and I was obliged at last to insist on her going to another son-in-law."

"Rather selfish conduct towards your brother-in-law," I said to myself, and then added audibly, "I hope you have thus solved the difficulty satisfactorily."

"Not at all. Things are worse now than they were. I agreed to pay her three roubles a month, and have regularly fulfilled my promise, but lately she has thought it not enough, and she made a complaint to the Bishop. Last week I went to him to defend myself, but as I had not money enough for all the officials in the Consistorium, I could not obtain justice. My mother-in-law had made all sorts of absurd accusations against me, and consequently I was laid under an inhibition for six weeks!"

"And what is the effect of an inhibition?"

"The effect is that I cannot perform the ordinary rites of our religion. It is really very unjust," he added, assuming an indignant tone, "and very annoying. Think of all the hardship and inconvenience to which it gives rise."

As I thought of the hardship and inconvenience to which the parishioners must be exposed through the inconsiderate conduct of the old mother-in-law, I could

not but sympathise with my new acquaintance's indignation. My sympathy was, however, somewhat cooled when I perceived that I was on a wrong tack, and that the priest was looking at the matter from an entirely different point of view.

"You see," he said, "it is a most unfortunate time of year. The peasants have gathered in their harvest, and can give of their abundance. There are merry-makings and marriages, besides the ordinary deaths and baptisms. Altogether I shall lose by the thing more than a hundred roubles!"

I confess I was a little shocked on hearing the priest thus speak of his sacred functions as if they were an ordinary marketable commodity, and talk of the inhibition as a pushing undertaker might talk of sanitary improvements. My surprise was caused not by the fact that he regarded the matter from a pecuniary point of view—for I was old enough to know that clerical human nature is not altogether insensible to pecuniary considerations—but by the fact that he should thus undisguisedly express his opinions to a stranger without in the least suspecting that there was anything unseemly in his way of speaking. The incident appeared to me very characteristic, but I refrained from all audible comments, lest I should inadvertently check his communicativeness. With the view of encouraging it, I professed to be very much interested, as I really was, in what he said, and I asked him how in his opinion the present unsatisfactory state of things might be remedied.

"There is but one cure," he said, with a readiness that showed he had often spoken on the theme already, "and that is freedom and publicity. We full-grown men are treated like children, and watched like conspirators. If I wish to preach a sermon—not that I often wish to do such a thing, but there are occasions

when it is advisable—I am expected to show it first to the Blagotchinny, and——"

"I beg your pardon, who is the Blagotchinny?" .

"The Blagotchinny is a parish priest, who is in direct relations with the Consistory of the Province, and who is supposed to exercise a strict supervision over all the other parish priests of his district. He acts as the spy of the Consistory, which is filled with greedy, shameless officials, deaf to any one who does not come provided with a handful of roubles. The Bishop may be a good, well-intentioned man, but he always sees and acts through these worthless subordinates. Besides this, the Bishops and heads of monasteries, who monopolise the higher places in the ecclesiastical Administration, all belong to the Black Clergy—that is to say, they are all monks—and consequently cannot understand our wants. How can they, on whom celibacy is imposed by the rules of the Church, understand the position of a parish priest who has to bring up a family and to struggle with domestic cares of every kind? What they do is to take all the comfortable places for themselves, and leave us all the hard work. The monasteries are rich enough, and you see how poor we are. Perhaps you have heard that the parish priests extort money from the peasants —refusing to perform the rites of baptism or burial until a considerable sum has been paid. It is only too true, but who is to blame? The priest must live and bring up his family, and you cannot imagine the humiliations to which he has to submit in order to gain a scanty pittance. I know it by experience. When I make the periodical visitation I can see that the peasants grudge every handful of rye and every egg that they give me. I can overhear their sneers as I go away, and I know they have many sayings such as, 'The priest takes from the living and from the

dead.' Many of them fasten their doors, pretending to be away from home, and do not even take the precaution of keeping silent till I am out of hearing."

"You surprise me," I said, in reply to the last part of this long tirade; "I have always heard that the Russians are a very religious people—at least, the lower classes."

"So they are; but the peasantry are poor and heavily taxed. They set great importance on the sacraments, and observe rigorously the fasts, which comprise nearly a half of the year; but they show very little respect for their priests, who are almost as poor as themselves."

"But I do not see clearly how you propose to remedy this state of things."

"By freedom and publicity, as I said before." The worthy man seemed to have learned this formula by rote. "First of all, our wants must be made known. In some provinces there have been attempts to do this by means of provincial assemblies of the clergy, but these efforts have always been strenuously opposed by the Consistories, whose members fear publicity above all things. But in order to have publicity we must have more freedom."

Here followed a long discourse on freedom and publicity, which seemed to me very confused. So far as I could understand the argument, there was a good deal of reasoning in a circle. Freedom was necessary in order to get publicity, and publicity was necessary in order to get freedom; and the practical result would be that the clergy would enjoy bigger salaries and more popular respect. We had only got thus far in the investigation of the subject, when our conversation was interrupted by the rumbling of a peasant's cart. In a few seconds our friend Bátushka appeared, and the conversation took a different turn.

Since that time I have frequently spoken on this subject with competent authorities, and nearly all have admitted that the present condition of the clergy is highly unsatisfactory, and that the parish priest rarely enjoys the respect of his parishioners. In a semi-official report, which I once accidentally stumbled upon when searching for material of a different kind, the facts are stated in the following plain language: "The people"—I seek to translate as literally as possible—"do not respect the clergy, but persecute them with derision and reproaches, and feel them to be a burden. In nearly all the popular comic stories the priest, his wife, or his labourer is held up to ridicule, and in all the proverbs and popular sayings where the clergy are mentioned it is always with derision. The people shun the clergy, and have recourse to them not from the inner impulse of conscience, but from necessity. . . . And why do the people not respect the clergy? Because it forms a class apart; because, having received a false kind of education, it does not introduce into the life of the people the teaching of the Spirit, but remains in the mere dead forms of outward ceremonial, at the same time despising these forms even to blasphemy; because the clergy itself continually presents examples of want of respect to religion, and transforms the service of God into a profitable trade. Can the people respect the clergy when they hear how one priest stole money from below the pillow of a dying man at the moment of confession, how another was publicly dragged out of a house of ill-fame, how a third christened a dog, how a fourth whilst officiating at the Easter service was dragged by the hair from the altar by the deacon? Is it possible for the people to respect priests who spend their time in the gin-shop, write fraudulent petitions, fight with the cross in their

hands, and abuse each other in bad language at the altar?

"One might fill several pages with examples of this kind—in each instance naming the time and place—without overstepping the boundaries of the province of Nizhni-Novgorod. Is it possible for the people to respect the clergy when they see everywhere amongst them simony, carelessness in performing the religious rites, and disorder in administering the sacraments? Is it possible for the people to respect the clergy when they see that truth has disappeared from it, and that the Consistories, guided in their decisions not by rules, but by personal friendship and bribery, destroy in it the last remains of truthfulness? If we add to all this the false certificates which the clergy give to those who do not wish to partake of the Eucharist, the dues illegally extracted from the Old Ritualists, the conversion of the altar into a source of revenue, the giving of churches to priests' daughters as a dowry, and similar phenomena, the question as to whether the people can respect the clergy requires no answer."

As these words were written by an orthodox Russian,* celebrated for his extensive and intimate knowledge of Russian provincial life, and were addressed in all seriousness to a member of the Imperial family, we may safely assume that they contain a considerable amount of truth. The reader must not, however, imagine that all Russian priests are of the kind above referred to. Many of them are honest, respectable, well-intentioned men, who conscientiously fulfil their humble duties, and strive hard to procure a good education for their children. If they have less learning, culture, and refinement than the Roman Catholic priesthood, they have at the same time infinitely less

* Mr. Melnikof, in a "secret" Report to the Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaievitch.

fanaticism, less spiritual pride, and less intolerance towards the adherents of other faiths.

Both the good and the bad qualities of the Russian priesthood at the present time can be easily explained by its past history, and by certain peculiarities of the national character.

The Russian White Clergy—that is to say, the parish priests, as distinguished from the monks, who are called the Black Clergy—have had a curious history. In primitive times they were drawn from all classes of the population, and freely elected by the parishioners. When a man was elected by the popular vote, he was presented to the Bishop, and if he was found to be a fit and proper person for the office, he was at once ordained. But this custom early fell into disuse. The Bishops, finding that many of the candidates presented were illiterate peasants, gradually assumed the right of appointing the priests, with or without the consent of the parishioners; and their choice generally fell on the sons of the clergy as the men best fitted to take orders. The creation of Bishops' schools, afterwards called seminaries, in which the sons of the clergy were educated, naturally led, in the course of time, to the total exclusion of the other classes. The policy of the civil Government led to the same end. Peter the Great laid down the principle that every subject should in some way serve the State—the nobles as officers in the army or navy, or as officials in the civil service; the clergy as ministers of religion; and the lower classes as soldiers, sailors, or taxpayers. Of these three classes, the clergy had by far the lightest burdens, and consequently many nobles and peasants would willingly have entered its ranks. But this species of desertion the Government could not tolerate, and accordingly the priesthood was surrounded by a legal barrier, which prevented all

outsiders from entering it. Thus, by the combined efforts of the ecclesiastical and the civil Administration, the clergy became a separate class or caste, legally and actually incapable of mingling with the other classes of the population.

The simple fact that the clergy became an exclusive caste, with a peculiar character, peculiar habits, and peculiar ideals, would in itself have had a prejudicial influence on the priesthood; but this was not all. The caste increased in numbers by the process of natural reproduction much more rapidly than the offices to be filled, so that the supply of priests and deacons soon far exceeded the demand; and the disproportion between supply and demand became every year greater and greater. In this way was formed an ever-increasing clerical Proletariat, which—as is always the case with a Proletariat of any kind—gravitated towards the towns. In vain the Government issued ukazes prohibiting the priests from quitting their places of domicile, and treated as vagrants and runaways those who disregarded the prohibition; in vain successive sovereigns endeavoured to diminish the number of these supernumeraries by drafting them wholesale into the army. In Moscow, St. Petersburg, and all the larger towns the cry was, "Still they come!" Every morning, in the Kremlin of Moscow, a large crowd of them assembled for the purpose of being hired to officiate in the private chapels of the rich nobles, and a great deal of hard bargaining took place between the priests and the lackeys sent to hire them—conducted in the same spirit, and in nearly the same forms, as that which simultaneously took place in the bazaar close by between extortionate traders and thrifty housewives. "Listen to me," a priest would say, as an ultimatum, to a lackey who was trying to beat down the price; "if you don't

give me seventy-five kopeks without further ado, I'll take a bite of this roll, and that will be an end to it!" And that would have been an end to the bargaining, for, according to the rules of the Church, a priest cannot officiate after breaking his fast. The ultimatum, however, could be used with effect only to country servants who had recently come to town. A sharp lackey, experienced in this kind of diplomacy, would have laughed at the threat, and replied coolly, "Bite away, Bátushka; I can find plenty more of your sort!" Amusing scenes of this kind I have heard described by old people who professed to have been eye-witnesses.

The condition of the priests who remained in the villages was not much better. Those of them who were fortunate enough to find places were raised at least above the fear of absolute destitution, but their position was by no means enviable. They received little consideration or respect from the peasantry, and still less from the nobles. When the church was situated not on the State Domains, but on a private estate, they were practically under the power of the proprietor—almost as completely as his serfs; and sometimes that power was exercised in a most humiliating and shameful way. I have heard, for instance, of one priest who was ducked in a pond on a cold winter day for the amusement of the proprietor and his guests —choice spirits, of rough, jovial temperament; and of another who, having neglected to take off his hat as he passed the proprietor's house, was put into a barrel and rolled down a hill into the river at the bottom!

In citing these incidents, I do not at all mean to imply that they represent the relations which usually existed between proprietors and village priests, for I am quite aware that wanton cruelty was not among the ordinary vices of Russian serf-owners. My object in

mentioning the incidents is to show how a brutal proprietor—and it must be admitted that there were not a few brutal individuals in the class—could maltreat a priest without much danger of being called to account for his conduct. Of course such conduct was an offence in the eyes of the criminal law; but the criminal law of that time was very short-sighted, and strongly disposed to close its eyes completely when the offender was an influential proprietor. Had the incidents reached the ears of the Emperor Nicholas, he would probably have ordered the culprit to be summarily and severely punished; but, as the Russian proverb has it, "Heaven is high, and the Tsar is far off." A village priest treated in this barbarous way could have little hope of redress, and, if he were a prudent man, he would make no attempt to obtain it; for any annoyance which he might give the proprietor by complaining to the ecclesiastical authorities would be sure to be paid back to him with interest in some indirect way.

The sons of the clergy who did not succeed in finding regular sacerdotal employment were in a still worse position. Many of them served as scribes or subordinate officials in the public offices, where they commonly eked out their scanty salaries by unblushing extortion and pilfering. Those who did not succeed in gaining even modest employment of this kind had to keep off starvation by less lawful means, and not unfrequently found their way into the prisons or to Siberia.

In judging of the Russian priesthood of the present time, we must call to mind this severe school through which it has passed, and we must also take into consideration the spirit which has been for centuries predominant in the Eastern Church—I mean the strong tendency both in the clergy and in the laity to

attribute an inordinate importance to the ceremonial element of religion. Primitive mankind is everywhere and always disposed to regard religion as simply a mass of mysterious rites, which have a secret magical power of averting evil in this world and securing felicity in the next. To this general rule the Russian peasantry are no exception, and the Russian Church has not done all it might have done to eradicate this conception and to bring religion into closer association with ordinary morality. Hence such incidents as the following are still possible: A robber kills and rifles a traveller, but refrains from eating a piece of cooked meat which he finds in the cart, because it happens to be a fast-day! A peasant prepares to rob a young *attaché* of the Austrian Embassy in St. Petersburg, and ultimately kills his victim, but before going to the house he enters a church and commends his undertaking to the protection of the saints!! A housebreaker, when in the act of robbing a church, finds it difficult to extract the jewels from an Icon, and makes a vow that if a certain saint assists him he will place a rouble's-worth of tapers before the saint's image!! These facts are within the memory of the present generation. I knew the young *attaché*, and saw him a few days before his death.

All these are of course extreme cases, but they illustrate a tendency which in its milder forms is only too general amongst the Russian people—the tendency to regard religion as a mass of ceremonies which have a magical rather than a spiritual significance. The poor woman who kneels at a religious procession in order that the Icon may be carried over her head, and the rich merchant who invites the priests to bring some famous Icon to his house, illustrate this tendency in a more harmless form.

According to a popular saying, "As is the priest,

so is the parish," and the converse proposition is equally true—as is the parish, so is the priest. The great majority of priests, like the great majority of men in general, content themselves with simply striving to perform what is expected of them, and their character is consequently determined to a certain extent by the ideas and conceptions of their parishioners. This will become more apparent if we contrast the Russian priest with the Protestant pastor.

According to Protestant conceptions, the village pastor is a man of grave demeanour and exemplary conduct, and possesses a certain amount of education and refinement. He ought to expound weekly to his flock, in simple, impressive words, the great truths of Christianity, and exhort his hearers to walk in the paths of righteousness. Besides this, he is expected to comfort the afflicted, to assist the needy, to counsel those who are harassed with doubts, and to admonish those who openly stray from the narrow path. Such is the ideal in the popular mind, and pastors generally seek to realise it, if not in very deed, at least in appearance. The Russian priest, on the contrary, has no such ideal set before him by his parishioners. He is expected merely to conform to certain observances, and to perform punctiliously the rites and ceremonies prescribed by the Church. If he does this without practising extortion, his parishioners are quite satisfied. He rarely preaches or exhorts, and neither has nor seeks to have a moral influence over his flock. I have occasionally heard of Russian priests who approach to what I have termed the Protestant ideal, and I have even seen one or two of them, but I fear they are not numerous.

In the above contrast I have accidentally omitted one important feature. The Protestant clergy have in all countries rendered valuable service to the cause

of popular education. The reason of this is not difficult to find. In order to be a good Protestant it is necessary to "search the Scriptures," and to do this one must be able at least to read. To be a good member of the Greek Orthodox Church, on the contrary, according to popular conceptions, the reading of the Scriptures is not necessary, and therefore primary education has not in the eyes of the Greek Orthodox priest the same importance which it has in the eyes of the Protestant pastor.

It must be admitted that the Russian people are in a certain sense religious. They go regularly to church on Sundays and holy-days, cross themselves repeatedly when they pass a church or Icon, take the Holy Communion at stated seasons, rigorously abstain from animal food—not only on Wednesdays and Fridays, but also during Lent and the other long fasts —make occasional pilgrimages to holy shrines, and, in a word, fulfil punctiliously the ceremonial observances which they suppose necessary for salvation. But here their religiousness ends. They are generally profoundly ignorant of religious doctrine, and know little or nothing of Holy Writ. A peasant, it is said, was once asked by a priest if he could name the three Persons of the Trinity, and replied without a moment's hesitation, "How can one not know that, Bátushka? Of course it is the Saviour, the Mother of God, and Saint Nicholas the miracle-worker!"

That answer represents fairly enough the theological attainments of a very large section of the peasantry. The anecdote is so often repeated that it is probably an invention, but it is not a calumny. Of theology and of what Protestants term the "inner religious life," the orthodox Russian peasant—of Dissenters, to whom these remarks do not apply, I shall speak later—has no conception. For him the cere-

monial part of religion suffices, and he has the most unbounded, childlike confidence in the saving efficacy of the rites which he practises. If he has been baptised in infancy, has regularly observed the fasts, has annually partaken of the Holy Communion, and has just confessed and received extreme unction, he feels death approach with the most perfect tranquillity. He is tormented with no doubts as to the efficacy of faith or works, and has no fears that his past life may possibly have rendered him unfit for eternal felicity. Like a man in a sinking ship who has buckled on his life-preserver, he feels perfectly secure. With no fear for the future and little regret for the present or the past, he awaits calmly the dread summons, and dies with a resignation which a Stoic philosopher might envy.

In the above paragraph I have used the word Icon, and perhaps the reader may not clearly understand the word. Let me explain then, briefly, what an Icon is —a very necessary explanation, for the Icons play an important part in the religious observances of the Russian people.

Icons are pictorial, usually half-length, representations of the Saviour, of the Madonna, or of a saint, executed in archaic Byzantine style, on a yellow or gold ground, and varying in size from a square inch to several square feet. Very often the whole picture, with the exception of the face and hands of the figure, is covered with a metal *plaque*, embossed so as to represent the form of the figure and the drapery. When this *plaque* is not used, the crown and costume are often adorned with pearls and other precious stones—sometimes of great price.

In respect of religious significance, Icons are of two kinds: simple, and miraculous or miracle-working (*tchudotvorny*). The former are manufactured in enor-

mous quantities—chiefly in the province of Vladimir, where whole villages are employed in this kind of work—and are to be found in every Russian house, from the hut of the peasant to the palace of the Emperor. They are generally placed high up in a corner facing the door, and good orthodox Christians on entering bow in that direction, making at the same time the sign of the cross. Before and after meals the same short ceremony is always performed. On the eve of fête days a small lamp is kept burning before at least one of the Icons in the house.

The wonder-working Icons are comparatively few in number, and are always carefully preserved in a church or chapel. They are commonly believed to have been "not made with hands," and to have appeared in a miraculous way. A monk, or it may be a common mortal, has a vision, in which he is informed that he may find a miraculous Icon in such a place, and on going to the spot indicated he finds it, sometimes buried, sometimes hanging on a tree. The sacred treasure is then removed to a church, and the news spreads like wildfire through the district. Thousands flock to prostrate themselves before the heaven-sent picture, and some are healed of their diseases—a fact that plainly indicates its miracle-working power. The whole affair is then officially reported to the Most Holy Synod, the highest ecclesiastical authority in Russia, in order that the existence of the miracle-working power may be fully and regularly proved. The official recognition of the fact is by no means a mere matter of form, for the Synod is well aware that wonder-working Icons are always a rich source of revenue to the monasteries where they are kept, and that zealous Superiors are consequently apt in such cases to lean to the side of credulity, rather than that of over-severe criticism. A regular investigation is

therefore made, and the formal recognition is not granted till the testimony of the finder is thoroughly examined and the alleged miracles duly authenticated. If the recognition is granted, the Icon is treated with the greatest veneration, and is sure to be visited by pilgrims from far and near.

Some of the most revered Icons—as, for instance, the Kazan Madonna—have annual fête days instituted in their honour; or, more correctly speaking, the anniversary of their miraculous appearance is observed as a religious holiday. A few of them have an additional title to popular respect and veneration: that of being intimately associated with great events in the national history. The Vladimir Madonna, for example, once saved Moscow from the Tartars; the Smolensk Madonna accompanied the army in the glorious campaign against Napoleon in 1812; and when in that year it was known in Moscow that the French were advancing on the city, the people wished the Metropolitan to take the Iberian Madonna, which may still be seen near one of the gates of the Kremlin, and to lead them out armed with hatchets against the enemy.

If the Russian priests have done little to advance popular education, they have at least never intentionally opposed it. Unlike their Roman Catholic brethren, they do not hold that "a little learning is a dangerous thing," and do not fear that faith may be endangered by knowledge. Indeed, it is a remarkable fact that the Russian Church regards with profound apathy those various intellectual movements which cause serious alarm to many thoughtful Christians in Western Europe. It considers religion as something so entirely apart that its votaries do not feel the necessity of bringing their theological beliefs into logical harmony with their scientific conceptions. A man may remain a good orthodox Christian long after

he has adopted scientific opinions irreconcilable with Eastern Orthodoxy, or, indeed, with dogmatic Christianity of any kind. In the confessional the priest never seeks to ferret out heretical opinions; and I can recall no instance in Russian history of a man being burnt at the stake on the demand of the ecclesiastical authorities, as so often happened in the Roman Catholic world, for his scientific views. This tolerance proceeds partly, no doubt, from the fact that the Eastern Church in general, and the Russian Church in particular, have remained for centuries in a kind of intellectual torpor. Even such a fervent orthodox Christian as the late Ivan Aksákof perceived this absence of healthy vitality, and he did not hesitate to declare his conviction that "neither the Russian nor the Slavonic world will be resuscitated . . . so long as the Church remains in such lifelessness (*mertvennost'*), which is not a matter of chance, but the legitimate fruit of some organic defect."*

Though the unsatisfactory condition of the parochial clergy is generally recognised by the educated classes, very few people take the trouble to consider seriously how it might be improved. During the Reform enthusiasm which raged for some years after the Crimean War ecclesiastical affairs were entirely overlooked. Many of the reformers of those days were so very "advanced" that religion in all its forms seemed to them an old-world superstition which tended to retard rather than accelerate social progress, and which consequently should be allowed to die as tranquilly as possible; whilst the men of more moderate views found they had enough to do in emancipating the serfs and reforming the corrupt civil and judicial Administration. During the subsequent reactionary

* Solovyoff. Otcherki iz istorii Russkoi Literaturi XIX. veka. St. Petersburg, 1903, p. 269.

period, which culminated in the reign of the late Emperor, Alexander III., much more attention was devoted to Church matters, and it came to be recognised in official circles that something ought to be done for the parish clergy in the way of improving their material condition so as to increase their moral influence. With this object in view, M. Pobêdonostsef, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, induced the Government in 1893 to make a State-grant of about 6,500,000 roubles, which should be increased every year, but the sum was very inadequate, and a large portion of it was devoted to purposes of political propaganda in the form of maintaining Greek Orthodox priests in districts where the population was Protestant or Roman Catholic. Consequently, of the 35,865 parishes which Russia contains, only 18,936, or a little more than one-half, were enabled to benefit by the grant. In an optimistic, semi-official statement published as late as 1896 it is admitted that "the means for the support of the parish clergy must even now be considered insufficient and wanting in stability, making the priests dependent on the parishioners, and thereby preventing the establishment of the necessary moral authority of the spiritual father over his flock."

In some places the needs of the Church are attended to by voluntary parish curatorships which annually raise a certain sum of money, and the way in which they distribute it is very characteristic of the Russian people, who have a profound veneration for the Church and its rites, but very little consideration for the human beings who serve at the altar. In 14,564 parishes possessing such curatorships no less than 2,500,000 roubles were collected, but of this sum 2,000,000 were expended on the maintenance and embellishment of churches, and only 174,000 were

devoted to the personal wants of the clergy. According to the semi-official document from which these figures are taken the whole body of the Russian White Clergy in 1893 numbered 99,391, of whom 42,513 were priests, 12,953 deacons, and 43,925 clerks.

In more recent observations among the parochial clergy, I have noticed premonitory symptoms of important changes. This may be illustrated by an entry in my note-book, written in a village of one of the Southern provinces, under date 30th September, 1903:—

"I have made here the acquaintance of two good specimens of the parish clergy, both excellent men in their way but very different from each other. The elder one, Father Dmitri, is of the old school, a plain, practical man, who fulfils his duties conscientiously according to his lights, but without enthusiasm. His intellectual wants are very limited, and he devotes his attention chiefly to the practical affairs of every-day life, which he manages very successfully. He does not squeeze his parishioners unduly, but he considers that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and insists on his flock providing for his wants according to their means. At the same time he farms on his own account and attends personally to all the details of his farming operations. With the condition and doings of every member of his flock he is intimately acquainted, and, on the whole, as he never idealised anything or anybody, he has not a very high opinion of them.

"The younger priest, Father Alexander, is of a different type, and the difference may be remarked even in his external appearance. There is a look of delicacy and refinement about him, though his dress and domestic surroundings are of the plainest, and

there is not a tinge of affectation in his manner. His language is less archaic and picturesque. He uses fewer Biblical and semi-Slavonic expressions—I mean expressions which belong to the antiquated language of the Church Service rather than to modern parlance—and his armoury of terse popular proverbs, which constitute such a characteristic trait of the peasantry, is less frequently drawn on. When I ask him about the present condition of the peasantry, his account does not differ substantially from that of his elder colleague, but he does not condemn their sins in the same forcible terms. He laments their shortcomings in an evangelical spirit, and has apparently aspirations for their future improvement. Admitting frankly that there is a great deal of lukewarmness among them, he hopes to revive their interest in ecclesiastical affairs and he has an idea of constituting a sort of church committee for attending to the temporal affairs of the village church and for works of charity, but he looks to influencing the younger rather than the older generation.

"His interest in his parishioners is not confined to their spiritual welfare, but extends to their material well-being. Of late an association for mutual credit has been founded in the village, and he uses his influence to induce the peasants to take advantage of the benefits it offers, both to those who are in need of a little ready money and to those who might invest their savings, instead of keeping them hidden away in an old stocking or buried in an earthen pot. The proposal to create a local agricultural society meets also with his sympathy."

If the number of parish priests of this type increase, the clergy may come to exercise great moral influence on the common people.

CHAPTER V.

A MEDICAL CONSULTATION.

Unexpected Illness—A Village Doctor—Siberian Plague—My Studies—Russian Historians—A Russian Imitator of Dickens—A *ci-devant* Domestic Serf—Medicine and Witchcraft—A Remnant of Paganism—Credulity of the Peasantry—Absurd Rumours—A Mysterious Visit from St. Barbara—Cholera on Board a Steamer—Hospitals—Lunatic Asylums—Amongst Maniacs.

In enumerating the requisites for travelling in the less frequented parts of Russia, I omitted to mention one important condition: the traveller should be always in good health, and in case of illness be ready to dispense with regular medical attendance. This I learned by experience during my stay at Ivánofka.

A man who is accustomed to be always well, and has consequently cause to believe himself exempt from the ordinary ills that flesh is heir to, naturally feels aggrieved—as if someone had inflicted upon him an undeserved injury—when he suddenly finds himself ill. At first he refuses to believe the fact, and, as far as possible, takes no notice of the disagreeable symptoms.

Such was my state of mind on being awakened early one morning by peculiar symptoms which I had never before experienced. Unwilling to admit to myself the possibility of being ill, I got up, and endeavoured to dress as usual, but very soon discovered that I was unable to stand. There was no denying the fact: not only was I ill, but the malady, whatever it was, surpassed my powers of diagnosis; and when the symptoms increased steadily all that day and the following night, I was constrained to take the

humiliating decision of asking for medical advice. To my inquiries whether there was a doctor in the neighbourhood, the old servant replied, "There is not exactly a doctor, but there is a Feldsher in the village."

"And what is a Feldsher?"

"A Feldsher is . . . . is a Feldsher."

"I am quite aware of that, but I should like to know what you mean by the word. What is this Feldsher?"

"He's an old soldier who dresses wounds and gives physic."

The definition did not predispose me in favour of the mysterious personage, but as there was nothing better to be had I ordered him to be sent for, notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of the old servant, who evidently did not believe in *feldshers*.

In about half an hour a tall, broad-shouldered man entered, and stood bolt upright in the middle of the room in the attitude which is designated in military language by the word "Attention." His clean-shaven chin, long moustache, and closely cropped hair confirmed one part of the old servant's definition; he was unmistakably an old soldier.

"You are a Feldsher," I said, making use of the word which I had recently added to my vocabulary.

"Exactly so, your Nobility!" These words, the ordinary form of affirmation used by soldiers to their officers, were pronounced in a loud, metallic, monotonous tone, as if the speaker had been an automaton conversing with a brother automaton at a distance of twenty yards. As soon as the words were pronounced the mouth of the machine closed spasmodically, and the head, which had been momentarily turned towards me, reverted to its former position with a jerk, as if it had received the order "Eyes front!"

"Then please to sit down here, and I'll tell you about my ailment." Upon this the figure took three paces to the front, wheeled to the right-about, and sat down on the edge of the chair, retaining the position of "Attention" as nearly as the sitting posture would allow. When the symptoms had been carefully described, he knitted his brows, and after some reflection remarked, "I can give you a dose of . . . ." Here followed a long word which I did not understand.

"I don't wish you to give me a dose of anything till I know what is the matter with me. Though a bit of a doctor myself, I have no idea what it is, and, pardon me, I think you are in the same position." Noticing a look of ruffled professional dignity on his face, I added, as a sedative, "It is evidently something very peculiar, so that if the first medical practitioner in the country were present he would probably be as much puzzled as ourselves."

The sedative had the desired effect. "Well, sir, to tell you the truth," he said, in a more human tone of voice, "I do not clearly understand what it is."

"Exactly; and therefore I think we had better leave the cure to Nature, and not interfere with her mode of treatment."

"Perhaps it would be better."

"No doubt. And now, since I have to lie here on my back, and feel rather lonely, I should like to have a talk with you. You are not in a hurry, I hope?"

"Not at all. My assistant knows where I am, and will send for me if I am required."

"So you have an assistant, have you?"

"Oh yes; a very sharp young fellow, who has been two years in the Feldsher school, and has now come here to help me and learn more by practice. That is a new way. I never was at a school of the kind myself, and had to pick up what I could when a

servant in the hospital. There were, I believe, no such schools in my time. The one where my assistant learned was opened by the Zemstvo."

"The Zemstvo is the new local administration, is it not?"

"Exactly so. And I could not do without the assistant," continued my new acquaintance, gradually losing his rigidity, and showing himself, what he really was, a kindly, talkative man. "I have often to go to other villages, and almost every day a number of peasants come here. At first I had very little to do, for the people thought I was an official, and would make them pay dearly for what I should give them; but now they know that they don't require to pay, and come in great numbers. And everything I give them—though sometimes I don't clearly understand what the matter is—seems to do them good. I believe that faith does as much as physic."

"In my country," I remarked, "there is a sect of doctors who get the benefit of that principle. They give their patients two or three little balls no bigger than a pin's head, or a few drops of tasteless liquid, and they sometimes work wonderful cures."

"That system would not do for us. The Russian muzhik would have no faith if he swallowed merely things of that kind. What he believes in is something with a very bad taste, and lots of it. That is his idea of a medicine; and he thinks that the more he takes of a medicine, the better chance he has of getting well. When I wish to give a peasant several doses I make him come for each separate dose, for I know that if I did not he would probably swallow the whole as soon as he was out of sight. But there is not much serious disease here—not like what I used to see on the Sheksná. You have been on the Sheksná?"

"Not yet, but I intend going there." The Sheksná is a river which falls into the Volga, and forms part of the great system of water communication connecting the Volga with the Neva.

"When you go there you will see lots of diseases. If there is a hot summer, and plenty of barges passing, something is sure to break out—typhus, or black small-pox, or Siberian plague, or something of the kind. That Siberian plague is a curious thing. Whether it really comes from Siberia, God only knows. So soon as it breaks out the horses die by dozens, and sometimes men and women are attacked, though it is not properly a human disease. They say that flies carry the poison from the dead horses to the people. The sign of it is a thing like a boil, with a dark-coloured rim. If this is cut open in time the person may recover, but if it is not the person dies. There is cholera, too, sometimes."

"What a delightful country," I said to myself, "for a young doctor who wishes to make discoveries in the science of disease!" The catalogue of diseases inhabiting this favoured region was apparently not yet complete, but it was cut short for the moment by the arrival of the assistant, with the announcement that his superior was wanted.

This first interview with the *feldsher* was, on the whole, satisfactory. He had not rendered me any medical assistance, but he had helped me to pass an hour pleasantly, and had given me a little information of the kind I desired. My later interviews with him were equally agreeable. He was naturally an intelligent, observant man, who had seen a great deal of the Russian world, and could describe graphically what he had seen. Unfortunately the horizontal position to which I was condemned prevented me from noting down at the time the interesting things which he

related to me. His visits, together with those of Karl Karl'itch and of the priest, who kindly spent a great part of his time with me, helped me to while away many an hour which would otherwise have been dreary enough.

During the intervals when I was alone I devoted myself to reading—sometimes Russian history and sometimes works of fiction. The history was that of Karamzin, who may fairly be called the Russian Livy. It interested me much by the facts which it contained, but irritated me not a little by the rhetorical style in which it is written. Afterwards, when I had waded through some twenty volumes of the gigantic work of Solovyoff—or Solovief, as the name is sometimes unphonetically written—which is simply a vast collection of valuable but undigested material, I was much less severe on the picturesque descriptions and ornate style of his illustrious predecessor. The first work of fiction which I read was a collection of tales by Grigorόvitch, which had been given to me by the author on my departure from St. Petersburg. These tales, descriptive of rural life in Russia, had been written, as the author afterwards admitted to me, under the influence of Dickens. Many of the little tricks and affectations which became painfully obtrusive in Dickens's later works, I had no difficulty in recognising under their Russian garb. In spite of these I found the book very pleasant reading, and received from it some new notions—to be afterwards verified, of course—about Russian peasant life.

One of these tales made a deep impression upon me, and I still remember the chief incidents. The story opens with the description of a village in late autumn. It has been raining for some time heavily, and the road has become covered with a deep layer of black mud. An old woman—a small proprietor—is

sitting at home with a friend, drinking tea and trying to read the future by means of a pack of cards. This occupation is suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a female servant, who announces that she has discovered an old man, apparently very ill, lying in one of the outhouses. The old woman goes out to see her uninvited guest, and, being of a kindly nature, prepares to have him removed to a more comfortable place, and properly attended to; but her servant whispers to her that perhaps he is a vagrant, and the generous impulse is thereby checked. When it is discovered that the suspicion is only too well founded, and that the man has no passport, the old woman becomes thoroughly alarmed. Her imagination pictures to her the terrible consequences that would ensue if the police should discover that she had harboured a vagrant. All her little fortune might be extorted from her. And if the old man should happen to die in her house or farmyard! The consequences in that case might be very serious. Not only might she lose everything, but she might even be dragged to prison. At the sight of these dangers the old woman forgets her tender-heartedness, and becomes inexorable. The old man, sick unto death though he be, must leave the premises instantly. Knowing full well that he will nowhere find a refuge, he walks forth into the cold, dark, stormy night, and next morning a dead body is found at a short distance from the village.

Why this story, which was not strikingly remarkable for artistic merit, impressed me so deeply I cannot say. Perhaps it was because I was myself ill at the time, and imagined how terrible it would be to be turned out on the muddy road on a cold, wet October night. Besides this, the story interested me as illustrating the terror which the police inspired

during the reign of Nicholas I. The ingenious devices which they employed for extorting money formed the subject of another sketch, which I read shortly afterwards, and which has likewise remained in my memory. The facts were as follows:—An officer of rural police, when driving on a country road, finds a dead body by the wayside. Congratulating himself on this bit of good luck, he proceeds to the nearest village, and lets the inhabitants know that all manner of legal proceedings will be taken against them, so that the supposed murderer may be discovered. The peasants are of course frightened, and give him a considerable sum of money in order that he may hush up the affair. An ordinary officer of police would have been quite satisfied with this ransom, but this officer is not an ordinary man, and is very much in need of money; he conceives, therefore, the brilliant idea of repeating the experiment. Taking up the dead body, he takes it away in his *tarantass*, and a few hours later declares to the inhabitants of a village some miles off that some of them have been guilty of murder, and that he intends to investigate the matter thoroughly. The peasants of course pay liberally in order to escape the investigation, and the rascally officer, emboldened by success, repeats the trick in different villages until he has gathered a large sum.

Tales and sketches of this kind were very much in fashion during the years which followed the death of the great autocrat, Nicholas I., when the long pent-up indignation against his severe, repressive *régime* was suddenly allowed free expression, and they were still much read during the first years of my stay in the country. Now the public taste has changed. The reform enthusiasm has evaporated, and the existing administrative abuses, more refined and less comical

than their predecessors, receive comparatively little attention from the satirists.

When I did not feel disposed to read, and had none of my regular visitors with me, I sometimes spent an hour or two in talking with the old man-servant who attended me. Anton was decidedly an old man, but what his age precisely was I never could discover; either he did not know himself, or he did not wish to tell me. In appearance he seemed about sixty, but from certain remarks which he made I concluded that he must be nearer seventy, though he had scarcely a grey hair on his head. As to who his father was he seemed, like the famous Topsy, to have no very clear ideas, but he had an advantage over Topsy with regard to his maternal ancestry. His mother had been a serf who had fulfilled for some time the functions of a lady's maid, and after the death of her mistress had been promoted to a not very clearly defined position of responsibility in the household. Anton, too, had been promoted in his time. His first function in the household had been that of assistant keeper of the tobacco-pipes, from which humble office he had gradually risen to a position which may be roughly designated as that of butler. All this time he had been, of course, a serf, as his mother had been before him; but being naturally a man of sluggish intellect, he had never thoroughly realised the fact, and had certainly never conceived the possibility of being anything different from what he was. His master was master, and he himself was Anton, obliged to obey his master, or at least conceal disobedience—these were long the main facts in his conception of the universe, and, as philosophers generally do with regard to fundamental facts or axioms, he had accepted them without examination. By means of these simple postulates he had led a

tranquil life, untroubled by doubts, until the year 1861, when the so-called freedom was brought to Ivánofka. He himself had not gone to the church to hear Bátushka read the Tsar's manifesto, but his master, on returning from the ceremony, had called him and said, "Anton, you are free now, but the Tsar says you are to serve as you have done for two years longer."

To this startling announcement Anton had replied coolly, "Slushayus," or, as we should say, "Yes, sir," and without further comment had gone to fetch his master's breakfast; but what he saw and heard during the next few weeks greatly troubled his old conceptions of human society and the fitness of things. From that time must be dated, I suppose, the expression of mental confusion which his face habitually wore.

The first thing that roused his indignation was the conduct of his fellow-servants. Nearly all the unmarried ones seemed to be suddenly attacked by a peculiar matrimonial mania. The reason of this was that the new law expressly gave permission to the emancipated serfs to marry as they chose, without the consent of their masters, and nearly all the unmarried adults hastened to take advantage of their newly-acquired privilege, though many of them had great difficulty in raising the capital necessary to pay the priest's fees. Then came disorders among the peasantry, the death of the old master, and the removal of the family, first to St. Petersburg, and afterwards to Germany. Anton's mind had never been of a very powerful order, and these great events had exercised a deleterious influence upon it. When Karl Karl'itch, at the expiry of the two years, informed him that he might now go where he chose, he replied, with a look of blank, unfeigned astonishment, "Where can I go

to ?" He had never conceived the possibility of being forced to earn his bread in some new way, and begged Karl Karl'itch to let him remain where he was. This request was readily granted, for Anton was an honest, faithful servant, and sincerely attached to the family, and it was accordingly arranged that he should receive a small monthly salary, and occupy an intermediate position between those of major-domo and head watch-dog.

Had Anton been transformed into a real watch-dog he could scarcely have slept more than he did. His power of sleeping, and his somnolence when he imagined he was awake, were his two most prominent characteristics. Out of consideration for his years and his love of repose, I troubled him as little as possible; but even the small amount of service which I demanded he contrived to curtail in an ingenious way. The time and exertion required for traversing the intervening space between his own room and mine might, he thought, be more profitably employed; and accordingly he extemporised a bed in a small ante-chamber, close to my door, and took up there his permanent abode. If sonorous snoring be sufficient proof that the performer is asleep, then I must conclude that Anton devoted about three-fourths of his time to sleeping and a large part of the remaining fourth to yawning and elongated guttural ejaculations. At first this little arrangement considerably annoyed me, but I bore it patiently, and afterwards received my reward, for during my illness I found it very convenient to have an attendant within call. And I must do Anton the justice to say that he served me well in his own somnolent fashion. He seemed to have the faculty of hearing when asleep, and generally appeared in my room before he had succeeded in getting his eyes completely open.

Anton had never found time, during his long life, to form many opinions, but he had somehow imbibed or inhaled a few convictions, all of a decidedly conservative kind, and one of these was that *feldshers* were useless and dangerous members of society. Again and again he had advised me to have nothing to do with the one who visited me, and more than once he recommended to me an old woman of the name of Masha, who lived in a village a few miles off. Masha was what is known in Russia as a *znakharka*—that is to say, a woman who is half witch, half medical practitioner—the whole permeated with a strong leaven of knavery. According to Anton, she could effect by means of herbs and charms every possible cure short of raising from the dead, and even with regard to this last operation he cautiously refrained from expressing an opinion.

The idea of being subjected to a course of herbs and charms by an old woman, who probably knew very little about the hidden properties of either, did not seem to me inviting, and more than once I flatly refused to have recourse to such unhallowed means. On due consideration, however, I thought that a professional interview with the old witch would be rather amusing, and then a brilliant idea occurred to me! I should bring together the *feldsher* and the *znakharka*, who no doubt hated each other with a Kilkenny-cat hatred, and let them fight out their differences before me for the benefit of science and my own delectation.

The more I thought of my project, the more I congratulated myself on having conceived such a scheme; but, alas! in this very imperfectly organised world of ours brilliant ideas are seldom realised, and in this case I was destined to be disappointed. Did the old woman's black art warn her of approaching danger, or was she simply actuated by a feeling of

professional jealousy and considerations of professional etiquette? To this question I can give no positive answer, but certain it is that she could not be induced to pay me a visit, and I was thus baulked of my expected amusement. I succeeded, however, in learning indirectly something about the old witch. She enjoyed among her neighbours that solid, durable kind of respect which is founded on vague, undefinable fear, and was believed to have effected many remarkable cures. In the treatment of syphilitic diseases, which are fearfully common among the Russian peasantry, she was supposed to be specially successful, and I have no doubt, from the vague descriptions which I received, that the charm which she employed in these cases was of a mercurial kind. Some time afterwards I saw one of her victims. Whether she had succeeded in destroying the poison I know not, but she had at least succeeded in destroying most completely the patient's teeth. How women of this kind obtain mercury, and how they have discovered its medicinal properties, I cannot explain. Neither can I explain how they have come to know the peculiar properties of ergot of rye, which they frequently employ for illicit purposes, familiar to all students of medical jurisprudence.

The *znakharka* and the *feldsher* represent two very different periods in the history of medical science—the magical and the scientific. The Russian peasantry have still many conceptions which belong to the former. The great majority of them are already quite willing, under ordinary circumstances, to use the scientific means of healing; but as soon as a violent epidemic breaks out, and the scientific means prove unequal to the occasion, the old faith revives, and recourse is had to magical rites and incantations. Of these rites many are very curious. Here, for instance, is one which had been performed in a village near

which I afterwards lived for some time. Cholera had been raging in the district for several weeks. In the village in question no case had yet occurred, but the inhabitants feared that the dreaded visitor would soon arrive, and the following ingenious contrivance was adopted for warding off the danger. At midnight, when the male population was supposed to be asleep, all the maidens met in nocturnal costume, according to a preconcerted plan, and formed a procession. In front marched a girl, holding an Icon. Behind her came her companions, dragging a *sokhá*—the primitive plough commonly used by the peasantry—by means of a long rope. In this order the procession made the circuit of the entire village, and it was confidently believed that the cholera would not be able to overstep the magical circle thus described. Many of the males probably knew, or at least suspected, what was going on; but they prudently remained within doors, knowing well that if they should be caught peeping indiscreetly at the mystic ceremony, they would be unmercifully beaten by those who were taking part in it.

This custom is doubtless a survival of old pagan superstitions. The introduction of the Icon is a modern innovation, which illustrates that curious blending of paganism and Christianity which is often to be met with in Russia, and of which I shall have more to say in another chapter.

Sometimes, when an epidemic breaks out, the panic produced takes a more dangerous form. The people suspect that it is the work of the doctors, or that some ill-disposed persons have poisoned the wells, and no amount of reasoning will convince them that their own habitual disregard of the most simple sanitary precautions has something to do with the phenomenon. I know of one case where

an itinerant photographer was severely maltreated in consequence of such suspicions; and once, in St. Petersburg, during the reign of Nicholas I., a serious riot took place. The excited populace had already thrown several doctors out of the windows of the hospital, when the Emperor arrived, unattended, in an open carriage, and quelled the disturbance by his simple presence, aided by his stentorian voice.

Of the ignorant credulity of the Russian peasantry I might relate many curious illustrations. The most absurd rumours sometimes awaken consternation throughout a whole district. One of the most common reports of this kind is that a female conscription is about to take place. About the time of the Duke of Edinburgh's marriage with the daughter of Alexander II. this report was specially frequent. A large number of young girls were to be kidnapped and sent to England in a red ship. Why the ship was to be red I can easily explain, because in the peasants' language the conceptions of red and beautiful are expressed by the same word (*krąsny*), and in the popular legends the epithet is indiscriminately applied to everything connected with princes and great personages; but what was to be done with the kidnapped maidens when they arrived at their destination, I never succeeded in discovering.

The most amusing instance of credulity which I can recall was the following, related to me by a peasant woman who came from the village where the incident had occurred. One day in winter, about the time of sunset, a peasant family was startled by the entrance of a strange visitor: a female figure dressed as St. Barbara is commonly represented in the religious pictures. All present were very much astonished by this apparition; but the figure told them, in a low, soft voice, to be of

good cheer, for she was St. Barbara, and had come to honour the family with a visit as a reward for their piety. The peasant thus favoured was not remarkable for his piety, but he did not consider it necessary to correct the mistake of his saintly visitor, and requested her to be seated. With perfect readiness she accepted the invitation, and began at once to discourse in an edifying way.

Meanwhile the news of this wonderful apparition spread like wildfire, and all the inhabitants of the village, as well as those of a neighbouring village about a mile distant, collected in and around the house. Whether the priest was among those who came my informant did not know. Many of those who had come could not get within hearing, but those at the outskirts of the crowd hoped that the saint might come out before disappearing. Their hopes were gratified. About midnight the mysterious visitor announced that she would go and bring St. Nicholas, the miracle worker, and requested all to remain perfectly still during her absence. The crowd respectfully made way for her, and she passed out into the darkness. With breathless expectation all awaited the arrival of St. Nicholas, who is the favourite saint of the Russian peasantry; but hours passed, and he did not appear. At last, towards sunrise, some of the less zealous spectators began to return home, and those of them who had come from the neighbouring village discovered to their horror that during their absence their horses had been stolen! At once they raised the hue-and-cry; and the peasants scoured the country in all directions in search of the *soi-disant* St. Barbara and her accomplices, but they never recovered the stolen property. "And serve them right, the blockheads!" added my informant, who had herself escaped falling into the trap by being absent from the village at the time.

It is but fair to add that the ordinary Russian peasant, though in some respects extremely credulous, and, like all other people, subject to occasional panics, is by no means easily frightened by real dangers. Those who have seen them under fire will readily credit this statement. For my own part, I have had opportunities of observing them merely in dangers of a non-military kind, and have often admired the perfect coolness displayed. Even an epidemic alarms them only when it attains a certain degree of intensity. Once I had a good opportunity of observing this on board a large steamer on the Volga. It was a very hot day in the early autumn. As it was well known that there was a great deal of Asiatic cholera all over the country, prudent people refrained from eating much raw fruit; but Russian peasants are not generally prudent men, and I noticed that those on board were consuming enormous quantities of raw cucumbers and water-melons. This imprudence was soon followed by its natural punishment. I refrain from describing the scene that ensued, but I may say that those who were attacked received from the others every possible assistance. Had no unforeseen accident happened, we should have arrived at Kazan on the following morning, and been able to send the patients to the hospital of that town; but as there was little water in the river, we had to cast anchor for the night, and next morning we ran aground and stuck fast. Here we had to remain patiently till a smaller steamer hove in sight. All this time there was not the slightest symptom of panic, and when the small steamer came alongside there was no frantic rush to get away from the infected vessel, though it was quite evident that only a few of the passengers could be taken off. Those who were nearest the gangway went quietly on board the small steamer,

and those who were less fortunate remained patiently till another steamer happened to pass.

The old conceptions of disease, as something that may be most successfully cured by charms and similar means, are rapidly disappearing. The Zemstvo—that is to say, the new local self-government—has done much towards this end by enabling the people to procure better medical attendance. In the towns there are public hospitals, which generally are—or at least seem to an unprofessional eye—in a very satisfactory condition. The resident doctors are daily besieged by a crowd of peasants, who come from far and near to ask advice and receive medicines. Besides this, in some provinces, *feldshers* are placed in the principal villages, and the doctor makes frequent tours of inspection. The doctors are generally well-educated men, and do a large amount of work for a very small remuneration.

Of the lunatic asylums, which are generally attached to the larger hospitals, I cannot speak very favourably. Some of the great central ones are all that could be desired, but others are badly constructed and fearfully overcrowded. One or two of those I visited appeared to me to be conducted on very patriarchal principles, as the following incident may illustrate.

I had been visiting a large hospital, and had remained there so long that it was already dark before I reached the adjacent lunatic asylum. Seeing no lights in the windows, I proposed to my companion, who was one of the inspectors, that we should delay our visit till the following morning, but he assured me that by the regulations the lights ought not to be extinguished till considerably later, and consequently there was no objection to our going in at once. If there was no legal objection, there was at least a

physical obstruction in the form of a large wooden door, and all our efforts to attract the attention of the porter or some other inmate were unavailing. At last, after much ringing, knocking, and shouting, a voice from within asked us who we were and what we wanted. A brief reply from my companion, not couched in the most polite or amiable terms, made the bolts rattle and the door open with surprising rapidity, and we saw before us an old man with long dishevelled hair, who, as far as appearance went, might have been one of the lunatics, bowing obsequiously and muttering apologies.

After groping our way along a dark corridor we entered a still darker room, and the door was closed and locked behind us. As the key turned in the rusty lock a wild scream rang through the darkness! Then came a yell, then a howl, and then various sounds which the poverty of the English language prevents me from designating—the whole blending into a hideous discord that would have been at home in some of the worst regions of Dante's Inferno. As to the cause of it I could not even form a conjecture. Gradually my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and I could dimly perceive white figures flitting about the room. At the same time I felt something standing near me, and close to my shoulder I saw a pair of eyes and long streaming hair. On my other side, equally close, was something very like a woman's night-cap. Though by no means of a nervous temperament, I felt uncomfortable. To be shut up in a dark room with an indefinite number of excited maniacs is not a comfortable position. How long the imprisonment lasted I know not—probably not more than two or three minutes, but it seemed a long time. At last a light was procured, and the whole affair was explained. The guardians, not

expecting the visit of an inspector at so late an hour, had retired for the night much earlier than usual, and the old porter had put us into the nearest ward until he could fetch a light—locking the door behind us lest any of the lunatics should escape. The noise had awakened one of the unfortunate inmates of the ward, and her hysterical scream had terrified the others.

By the influence of asylums, hospitals, and similar institutions, the old conceptions of disease, as I have said, are gradually dying out, but the *znakharka* still finds practice. The fact that the *znakharka* is to be found side by side not only with the *feldsher*, but also with the highly trained bacteriologist, is very characteristic of Russian civilisation, which is a strange conglomeration of products belonging to very different periods. The inquirer who undertakes the study of it will sometimes be scarcely less surprised than would be the naturalist who should unexpectedly stumble upon antediluvian megatheria grazing tranquilly in the same field with prize Southdowns. He will discover the most primitive institutions side by side with the latest products of French doctrinairism, and the most childish superstitions in close proximity with the most advanced free-thinking.

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CHAPTER VI.

A PEASANT FAMILY OF THE OLD TYPE.

Ivan Petroff—His Past Life—Co-operative Associations—Constitution of a Peasant Household—Predominance of Economic Conceptions over those of Blood-relationship—Peasant Marriages—Advantages of living in Large Families—Its Defects—Family Disruptions and their Consequences.

My illness had at least one good result. It brought me into contact with the *feldsher*, and through him, after my recovery, I made the acquaintance of several peasants living in the village. Of these by far the most interesting was an old man called Ivan Petroff.

Ivan must have been about sixty years of age, but was still robust and strong, and had the reputation of being able to mow more hay in a given time than any other peasant in the village. His head would have made a fine study for a portrait-painter. Like Russian peasants in general, he wore his hair parted in the middle—a custom which perhaps owes its origin to the religious pictures. The reverend appearance given to his face by his long fair beard, slightly tinged with grey, was in part counteracted by his eyes, which had a strange twinkle in them—whether of humour or of roguery, it was difficult to say. Under all circumstances—whether in his light, nondescript summer costume, or in his warm sheep-skin, or in the long, glossy, dark-blue, double-breasted coat which he put on occasionally on Sundays and holidays—he always looked a well-fed, respectable, prosperous member of society; whilst his imperturbable composure, and the entire absence of obsequiousness or truculence in his manner, indicated plainly that he possessed no small amount of calm, deep-rooted self-respect. A stranger, on seeing him, might readily

have leaped to the conclusion that he must be the Village Elder, but in reality he was a simple member of the Commune, like his neighbour, poor Zakhar Leshkof, who never let slip an opportunity of getting drunk, was always in debt, and, on the whole, possessed a more than dubious reputation.

Ivan had, it is true, been Village Elder some years before. When elected by the Village Assembly, against his own wishes, he had said quietly, "Very well, children; I will serve my three years"; and at the end of that period, when the Assembly wished to re-elect him, he had answered firmly, "No, children; I have served my term. It is now the turn of someone who is younger, and has more time. There's Peter Alekseyef, a good fellow, and an honest: you may choose him." And the Assembly chose the peasant indicated; for Ivan, though a simple member of the Commune, had more influence in Communal affairs than any other half-dozen members put together. No grave matter was decided without his being consulted, and there was at least one instance on record of the Village Assembly postponing deliberations for a week because he happened to be absent in St. Petersburg.

No stranger casually meeting Ivan would ever for a moment have suspected that that big man, of calm, commanding aspect, had been during a great part of his life a serf. And yet a serf he had been from his birth till he was about thirty years of age—not merely a serf of the State, but the serf of a proprietor who had lived habitually on his property. For thirty years of his life he had been dependent on the arbitrary will of a master who had the legal power to flog him as often and as severely as he considered desirable. In reality he had never been subjected to corporal punishment, for the proprietor to whom

he had belonged had been, though in some respects severe, a just and intelligent master.

Ivan's bright, sympathetic face had early attracted the master's attention, and it was decided that he should learn a trade. For this purpose he was sent to Moscow, and apprenticed there to a carpenter. After four years of apprenticeship he was able not only to earn his own bread, but to help the household in the payment of their taxes, and to pay annually to his master a fixed yearly sum—first ten, then twenty, then thirty, and ultimately, for some years immediately before the Emancipation, seventy roubles. In return for this annual sum he was free to work and wander about as he pleased, and for some years he had made ample use of his conditional liberty. I never succeeded in extracting from him a chronological account of his travels, but I could gather from his occasional remarks that he had wandered over a great part of European Russia. Evidently he had been in his youth what is colloquially termed "a roving blade," and had by no means confined himself to the trade which he had learned during his four years of apprenticeship. Once he had helped to navigate a raft from Vetluga to Astrakhan, a distance of about two thousand miles. At another time he had been at Archangel and Onega, on the shores of the White Sea. St. Petersburg and Moscow were both well known to him, and he had visited Odessa.

The precise nature of Ivan's occupations during these wanderings I could not ascertain; for, with all his openness of manner, he was extremely reticent regarding his commercial affairs. To all my inquiries on this topic he was wont to reply vaguely, "Lesnoe dyelo"—that is to say, "Timber business"; and from this I concluded that his chief occupation had been that of a timber merchant. Indeed, when I

knew him, though he was no longer a regular trader, he was always ready to buy any bit of forest that could be bought in the vicinity for a reasonable price.

During all this nomadic period of his life Ivan had never entirely severed his connection with his native village or with agricultural life. When about the age of twenty he had spent several months at home, taking part in the field labour, and had married a wife—a strong, healthy young woman, who had been selected for him by his mother, and strongly recommended to him on account of her good character and her physical strength. In the opinion of Ivan's mother, beauty was a kind of luxury which only nobles and rich merchants could afford, and ordinary comeliness was a very secondary consideration—so secondary as to be left almost entirely out of sight. This was likewise the opinion of Ivan's wife. She had never been comely herself, she used to say, but she had been a good wife to her husband. He had never complained about her want of good looks, and had never gone after those who were considered good-looking. In expressing this opinion she always first bent forward, then drew herself up to her full length, and finally gave a little jerky nod sideways, so as to clench the statement. Then Ivan's bright eye would twinkle more brightly than usual, and he would ask her how she knew that—reminding her that he was not always at home. This was Ivan's stereotyped mode of teasing his wife, and every time he employed it he was called an "old scarecrow," or something of the kind.

Perhaps, however, Ivan's jocular remark had more significance in it than his wife cared to admit, for during the first years of their married life they had seen very little of each other. A few days after the marriage, when according to our notions the honeymoon should be at its height, Ivan had gone to Moscow

for several months, leaving his young bride to the care of his father and mother. The young bride did not consider this an extraordinary hardship, for many of her companions had been treated in the same way, and according to public opinion in that part of the country there was nothing abnormal in the proceeding. Indeed, it may be said in general that there is very little romance or sentimentality about Russian peasant marriages. In this as in other respects the Russian peasantry are, as a class, extremely practical and matter-of-fact in their conceptions and habits, and are not at all prone to indulge in sublime, ethereal sentiments of any kind. They have little or nothing of what may be termed the Hermann and Dorothea element in their composition, and consequently know very little about those sentimental, romantic ideas which we habitually associate with the preliminary steps to matrimony. Even those authors who endeavour to idealise peasant life have rarely ventured to make their story turn on a sentimental love affair. Certainly in real life the wife is taken as a helpmate, or in plain language a worker, rather than as a companion, and the mother-in-law leaves her very little time to indulge in fruitless dreaming.

As time wore on, and his father became older and frailer, Ivan's visits to his native place became longer and more frequent, and when the old man was at last incapable of work, Ivan settled down permanently and undertook the direction of the household. In the meantime his own children had been growing up. When I knew the family it comprised—besides two daughters who had married early and gone to live with their parents-in-law—Ivan and his wife, two sons, three daughters-in-law, and an indefinite and frequently varying number of grandchildren. The fact that there were three daughters-in-law and only two

sons was the result of the Conscription, which had taken away the youngest son shortly after his marriage. The two who remained spent only a small part of the year at home. The one was a carpenter and the other a bricklayer, and both wandered about the country in search of employment, as their father had done in his younger days. There was, however, one difference. The father had always shown a leaning towards commercial transactions, rather than the simple practice of his handicraft, and consequently he had usually lived and travelled alone. The sons on the contrary, confined themselves to their handicrafts, and were always during the working season members of an *artél.*

The *artél* in its various forms is a curious institution. Those to which Ivan's sons belonged were simply temporary, itinerant associations of workmen, who during the summer lived together, fed together, worked together, and periodically divided amongst themselves the profits. This is the primitive form of the institution, and is now not very often met with. Here, as elsewhere, capital has made itself felt, and destroyed that equality which exists among the members of an *artél* in the above sense of the word. Instead of forming themselves into a temporary association, the workmen now generally make an engagement with a contractor who has a little capital, and receive from him fixed monthly wages. The only association which exists in this case is for the purchase and preparation of provisions, and even these duties are very often left to the contractor.

In some of the larger towns there are *artéls* of a much more complex kind—permanent associations, possessing a large capital, and pecuniarily responsible for the acts of the individual members. Of these, by far the most celebrated is that of the Bank Porters.

These men have unlimited opportunities of stealing, and are often entrusted with the guarding or transporting of enormous sums; but the banker has no cause for anxiety, because he knows that if any defalcations occur they will be made good to him by the *artél.* Such accidents very rarely happen, and the fact is by no means so extraordinary as many people suppose. The *artél,* being responsible for the individuals of which it is composed, is very careful in admitting new members, and a man when admitted is closely watched, not only by the regularly constituted office-bearers, but also by all his fellow-members who have an opportunity of observing him. If he begins to spend money too freely or to neglect his duties, though his employer may know nothing of the fact, suspicions are at once aroused among his fellow-members, and an investigation ensues—ending in summary expulsion if the suspicions prove to have been well founded. Mutual responsibility, in short, creates a very effective system of mutual supervision.

Of Ivan's sons, the one who was a carpenter visited his family only occasionally, and at irregular intervals; the bricklayer, on the contrary, as building is impossible in Russia during the cold weather, spent the greater part of the winter at home. Both of them paid a large part of their earnings into the family treasury, over which their father exercised uncontrolled authority. If he wished to make any considerable outlay, he consulted his sons on the subject; but as he was a prudent, intelligent man, and enjoyed the respect and confidence of the family, he never met with any strong opposition. All the field work was performed by him with the assistance of his daughters-in-law; only at harvest time he hired one or two labourers to help him.

Ivan's household was a good specimen of the

Russian peasant family of the old type. Previous to the Emancipation in 1861 there were many households of this kind, containing the representatives of three generations. All the members, young and old, lived together in patriarchal fashion under the direction and authority of the Head of the House, called usually the *Khozaïn*—that is to say, the Administrator; or, in some districts, the *Bolshák*, which means literally "the Big One." Generally speaking, this important position was occupied by the grandfather, or, if he was dead, by the eldest brother, but the rule was not very strictly observed. If, for instance, the grandfather became infirm, or if the eldest brother was incapacitated by disorderly habits or other cause, the place of authority was taken by some other member—it might be by a woman—who was a good manager, and possessed the greatest moral influence.

The relations between the Head of the Household and the other members depended on custom and personal character, and they consequently varied greatly in different families. If the Big One was an intelligent man, of decided, energetic character, like my friend Ivan, there was probably perfect discipline in the household, except perhaps in the matter of female tongues, which do not readily submit to the authority even of their owners; but very often it happened that the Big One was not thoroughly well fitted for his post, and in that case endless quarrels and bickerings inevitably took place. Those quarrels were generally caused and fomented by the female members of the family—a fact which will not seem strange if we try to realise how difficult it must be for several sisters-in-law to live together, with their children and a mother-in-law, within the narrow limits of a peasant's household. The complaints of the young bride, who finds that her mother-

in-law puts all the hard work on her shoulders, form a favourite motive in the popular poetry.

The house, with its appurtenances, the cattle, the agricultural implements, the grain and other products, the money gained from the sale of these products—in a word, the house and nearly everything it contained—were the joint property of the family. Hence, nothing was bought or sold by any member—not even by the Big One himself, unless he possessed an unusual amount of authority—without the express or tacit consent of the other grown-up males, and all the money that was earned was put into the common purse. When one of the sons left home to work elsewhere, he was expected to bring or send home all his earnings, except what he required for food, lodgings, and other *necessary* expenses; and if he understood the word "necessary" in too lax a sense, he had to listen to very plain-spoken reproaches when he returned. During his absence, which might last for a whole year or several years, his wife and children remained in the house as before, and the money which he earned could be devoted to the payment of the family taxes.

The peasant household of the old type is thus a primitive labour association, of which the members have all things in common, and it is not a little remarkable that the peasant conceives it as such rather than as a family. This is shown by the customary terminology, for the Head of the Household is not called by any word corresponding to Paterfamilias, but is termed, as I have said, *Khozaïn*, or Administrator—a word that is applied equally to a farmer, a shopkeeper, or the head of an industrial undertaking, and does not at all convey the idea of blood-relationship. It is likewise shown by what takes place when a household is broken up. On such occasions the degree of blood-relationship is not taken into con-

sideration in the distribution of the property. All the adult male members share equally. Illegitimate and adopted sons, if they have contributed their share of labour, have the same rights as the sons born in lawful wedlock. The married daughter, on the contrary—being regarded as belonging to her husband's family—and the son who has previously separated himself from the household, are excluded from the succession. Strictly speaking, the succession or inheritance is confined to the wearing apparel and any little personal effects of a deceased member. The house and all that it contains belong to the little household community; and, consequently, when it is broken up, by the death of the *Khozaïn* or other cause, the members do not inherit, but merely appropriate individually what they had hitherto possessed collectively. Thus there is properly no inheritance or succession, but simply liquidation and distribution of the property among the members. The written law of inheritance, founded on the conception of personal property, is quite unknown to the peasantry, and quite inapplicable to their mode of life. In this way a large and most important section of the Code remains a dead letter for about four-fifths of the population.

This predominance of practical economic considerations is exemplified also by the way in which marriages are arranged in these large families. In the primitive system of agriculture usually practised in Russia, the natural labour-unit—if I may use such a term—comprises a man, a woman, and a horse. As soon, therefore, as a boy becomes an able-bodied labourer he ought to be provided with the two accessories necessary for the completion of the labour-unit. To procure a horse, either by purchase or by rearing a foal, is the duty of the Head of the House; to procure a wife for the youth is the duty of "the

female Big One" (*Bolshúkha*). And the chief consideration in determining the choice is in both cases the same. Prudent domestic administrators are not to be tempted by showy horses or beautiful brides; what they seek is not beauty, but physical strength and capacity for work. When the youth reaches the age of eighteen he is informed that he ought to marry at once, and as soon as he gives his consent negotiations are opened with the parents of some eligible young person. In the larger villages the negotiations are sometimes facilitated by certain old women called *svakhi*, who occupy themselves specially with this kind of mediation; but very often the affair is arranged directly by, or through the agency of, some common friend of the two houses.

Care must of course be taken that there is no legal obstacle, and these obstacles are not always easily avoided in a small village, the inhabitants of which have been long in the habit of intermarrying. According to Russian ecclesiastical law, not only is marriage between first cousins illegal, but affinity is considered as equivalent to consanguinity—that is to say, a mother-in-law and a sister-in-law are regarded as a mother and a sister—and even the fictitious relationship created by standing together at the baptismal font as godfather and godmother is legally recognised, and may constitute a bar to matrimony. If all the preliminary negotiations are successful, the marriage takes place, and the bridegroom brings his bride home to the house of which he is a member. She brings nothing with her as a dowry except her trousseau, but she brings a pair of good strong arms, and thereby enriches her adopted family. Of course it happens occasionally—for human nature is everywhere essentially the same—that a young peasant falls in love with one of his former playmates, and brings his

little romance to a happy conclusion at the altar; but such cases are very rare, and as a rule it may be said that the marriages of the Russian peasantry are arranged under the influence of economic rather than sentimental considerations.

The custom of living in large families has many economic advantages. We all know the edifying fable of the dying man who showed to his sons by means of a piece of wicker-work the advantages of living together and assisting each other. In ordinary times the necessary expenses of a large household of ten members are considerably less than the combined expenses of two households comprising five members each, and when a "black day" comes, a large family can bear temporary adversity much more successfully than a small one. These are principles of world-wide application, but in the life of the Russian peasantry they have a peculiar force. Each adult peasant possesses, as I shall hereafter explain, a share of the Communal land, but this share is not sufficient to occupy all his time and working power. One married pair can easily cultivate two shares—at least in all provinces where the peasant allotments are not very large. Now, if a family is composed of two married couples, one of the men can go elsewhere and earn money, whilst the other, with his wife and sister-in-law, can cultivate the two combined shares of land. If, on the contrary, a family consists merely of one pair with their children, the man must either remain at home—in which case he may have difficulty in finding work for the whole of his time—or he must leave home, and entrust the cultivation of his share of the land to his wife, whose time must be in great part devoted to domestic affairs.

In the time of serfage the proprietors clearly perceived these and similar advantages, and compelled

their serfs to live together in large families. No family could be broken up without the proprietor's consent, and this consent was not easily obtained unless the family had assumed quite abnormal proportions and was permanently disturbed by domestic dissension. In the matrimonial affairs of the serfs, too, the majority of the proprietors systematically exercised a certain supervision, not necessarily from any paltry meddling spirit, but because their own material interests were thereby affected. A proprietor would not, for instance, allow the daughter of one of his serfs to marry a serf belonging to another proprietor—because he would thereby lose a female labourer—unless some compensation were offered. The compensation might be a sum of money, or the affair might be arranged on the principle of reciprocity by the master of the bridegroom allowing one of his female serfs to marry a serf belonging to the master of the bride.

However advantageous the custom of living in large families may appear when regarded from the economic point of view, it has very serious defects, both theoretical and practical.

That families connected by the ties of blood-relationship and marriage can easily live together in harmony is one of those social axioms which are accepted universally and believed by nobody. We all know by our own experience, or by that of others, that the friendly relations of two such families are greatly endangered by proximity of habitation. To live in the same street is not advisable; to occupy adjoining houses is positively dangerous; and to live under the same roof is certainly fatal to prolonged amity. There may be the very best intentions on both sides, and the arrangement may be inaugurated by the most gushing expressions of undying affection

and by the discovery of innumerable secret affinities, but neither affinities, affection, nor good intentions can withstand the constant friction and occasional jerks which inevitably ensue.

Now the reader must endeavour to realise that Russian peasants, even when clad in sheep-skins, are human beings like ourselves. Though they are often represented as abstract entities—as figures in a table of statistics or dots on a diagram—they have in reality "organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions." If not exactly "fed with the same food," they are at least "hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means," and liable to be irritated by the same annoyances, as we are. And those of them who live in large families are subjected to a kind of probation that most of us have never dreamed of. The families comprising a large household not only live together, but have nearly all things in common. Each member works, not for himself, but for the household, and all that he earns is expected to go into the family treasury. The arrangement almost inevitably leads to one of two results—either there are continual dissensions, or order is preserved by a powerful domestic tyranny.

It is quite natural, therefore, that when the authority of the landed proprietors was abolished in 1861, the large peasant families almost all crumbled to pieces. The arbitrary rule of the *Khozaïn* was based on, and maintained by, the arbitrary rule of the proprietor, and both naturally fell together. Households like that of our friend Ivan were preserved only in exceptional cases, where the Head of the House happened to possess an unusual amount of moral influence over the other members.

This change has unquestionably had a prejudicial

influence on the material welfare of the peasantry, but it must have added considerably to their domestic comfort, and may perhaps produce good moral results. For the present, however, the evil consequences are by far the most prominent. Every married peasant strives to have a house of his own, and many of them, in order to defray the necessary expenses, have been obliged to contract debts. This is a very serious matter. Even if the peasants could obtain money at five or six per cent., the position of the debtors would be bad enough, but it is in reality much worse, for the village usurers consider twenty or twenty-five per cent. a by no means exorbitant rate of interest. A laudable attempt has been made to remedy this state of things by village banks, but these have proved successful only in certain exceptional localities. As a rule the peasant who contracts debts has a hard struggle to pay the interest in ordinary times, and when some misfortune overtakes him—when, for instance, the harvest is bad or his horse is stolen—he probably falls hopelessly into pecuniary embarrassments. I have seen peasants not specially addicted to drunkenness or other ruinous habits sink to a helpless state of insolvency. Fortunately for such insolvent debtors, they are treated by the law with extreme leniency. Their house, their share of the common land, their agricultural implements, their horse—in a word, all that is necessary for their subsistence, is exempt from sequestration. The Commune, however, may bring strong pressure to bear on those who do not pay their taxes. When I lived among the peasantry in the seventies, corporal punishment, inflicted by order of the Commune, was among the means usually employed; and though the custom was recently prohibited by an Imperial decree of Nicholas II., I am not at all sure that it has entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PEASANTRY OF THE NORTH.

Communal Land—System of Agriculture—Parish Fêtes—Fasting—Winter Occupations—Yearly Migrations—Domestic Industries—Influence of Capital and Wholesale Enterprise—The State Peasants—Buckle's "History of Civilisation"—A Precocious *Yamstchik*—"People who play Pranks"—A Midnight Alarm—The Far North.

IVÁNOFKA may be taken as a fair specimen of the villages in the northern half of the country, and a brief description of its inhabitants will convey a tolerably correct notion of the northern peasantry in general.

Nearly the whole of the female population, and about one-half of the male inhabitants, are habitually engaged in cultivating the Communal land, which comprises about two thousand acres of a light sandy soil. The arable part of this land is divided into three large fields, each of which is cut up into long narrow strips. The first field is reserved for the winter grain—that is to say, rye, which forms, in the shape of black bread, the principal food of the rural population. In the second are raised oats for the horses, and buckwheat, which is largely used for food. The third lies fallow, and is used in the summer as pasturage for the cattle.

All the villagers in this part of the country divide the arable land in this way, in order to suit the triennial rotation of crops. This triennial system is extremely simple. The field which is used this year for raising winter grain will be used next year for raising summer grain, and in the following year will lie fallow. Before being sown with winter grain it

ought to receive a certain amount of manure. Every family possesses in each of the two fields under cultivation one or more of the long narrow strips or belts into which they are divided.

The annual life of the peasantry is that of simple husbandmen, inhabiting a country where the winter is long and severe. The agricultural year begins in April with the melting of the snow. Nature has been lying dormant for some months. Awaking now from her long sleep, and throwing off her white mantle, she strives to make up for lost time. No sooner has the snow disappeared than the fresh young grass begins to shoot up, and very soon afterwards the shrubs and trees begin to bud. The rapidity of this transition from winter to spring astonishes the inhabitants of more temperate climes.

On St. George's Day (April 23rd*) the cattle are brought out for the first time, and sprinkled with holy water by the priest. They are never very fat, but at this period of the year their appearance is truly lamentable. During the winter they have been cooped up in small unventilated cow-houses, and fed almost exclusively on straw; now, when they are released from their imprisonment, they look like the ghosts of their former emaciated selves. All are lean and weak, many are lame, and some cannot rise to their feet without assistance.

Meanwhile the peasants are impatient to begin the field labour. An old proverb which they all know says: "Sow in mud and you will be a prince"; and they always act in accordance with this dictate of traditional wisdom. As soon as it is possible to plough they begin to prepare the land for the summer grain,

* With regard to saints' days, I always give the date according to the old style. To find the date according to our calendar, thirteen days must be added.

and this labour occupies them probably till the end of May. Then comes the work of carting out manure and preparing the fallow field for the winter grain, which will last probably till about St. Peter's Day (June 29th), when the hay-making generally begins. After the hay-making comes the harvest, by far the busiest time of the year. From the middle of July—especially from St. Elijah's Day (July 20th), when the saint is usually heard rumbling along the heavens in his chariot of fire*—until the end of August, the peasant may work day and night, and yet he will find that he has barely time to get all his work done. In little more than a month he has to reap and stack his grain—rye, oats, and whatever else he may have sown either in spring or in the preceding autumn—and to sow the winter grain for next year. To add to his troubles, it sometimes happens that the rye and the oats ripen almost simultaneously, and his position is then still more difficult.

Whether the seasons favour him or not, the peasant has at this time a hard task, for he can rarely afford to hire the requisite number of labourers, and has generally the assistance merely of his wife and family; but he can at this season work for a short time at high pressure, for he has the prospect of soon obtaining a good rest and an abundance of food. About the end of September the field labour is finished, and on the first day of October the harvest festival begins—a joyous season, during which the parish fêtes are commonly celebrated.

To celebrate a parish fête in true orthodox fashion it is necessary to prepare beforehand a large quantity of *braga*—a kind of home-brewed small beer—and to bake a plentiful supply of *piroghi* or meat pies. Oil,

* It is thus that the peasants explain the thunder, which is often heard at that season.

too, has to be procured, and vodka (rye spirit) in goodly quantity. At the same time the big room of the *izbá*, as the peasant's house is called, has to be cleared, the floor washed, and the table and benches scrubbed. The evening before the fête, while the *piroghi* are being baked, a little lamp burns before the Icon in the corner of the room, and perhaps one or two guests from a distance arrive in order that they may have on the morrow a full day's enjoyment.

On the morning of the fête the proceedings begin by a long service in the church, at which all the inhabitants are present in their best holiday costumes, except those matrons and young women who remain at home to prepare the dinner. About mid-day dinner is served in each *izbá* for the family and their friends. In general the Russian peasant's fare is of the simplest kind, and rarely comprises animal food of any sort—not from any vegetarian proclivities,—but merely because beef, mutton, and pork are too expensive; but on a holiday, such as a parish fête, there is always on the dinner-table a considerable variety of dishes. In the house of a well-to-do family there will be not only greasy cabbage-soup and *kasha*—a dish made from buckwheat—but also pork, mutton, and perhaps even beef. *Braga* will be supplied in unlimited quantities, and more than once vodka will be handed round. When the repast is finished, all rise together, and, turning towards the Icon in the corner, bow and cross themselves repeatedly. The guests then say to their host, "Spasibo za khleb za sol"—that is to say, "Thanks for your hospitality," or more literally, "Thanks for bread and salt"; and the host replies, "Do not be displeased, sit down once more for good luck"—or perhaps he puts the last part of his request into the form of a rhyming couplet to the following effect: "Sit down, that the hens may brood,

and that the chickens and bees may multiply!" All obey this request, and there is another round of vodka.

After dinner some stroll about, chatting with their friends, or go to sleep in some shady nook, whilst those who wish to make merry go to the spot where the young people are singing, playing, and amusing themselves in various ways. As the sun sinks towards the horizon, the more grave, staid guests wend their way homewards, but many remain for supper; and as evening advances the effects of the vodka become more and more apparent. Sounds of revelry are heard more frequently from the houses, and a large proportion of the inhabitants and guests appear on the road in various degrees of intoxication. Some of these vow eternal affection to their friends, or with flaccid gestures and in incoherent tones harangue invisible audiences; others stagger about aimlessly in besotted self-contentment, till they drop down in a state of complete unconsciousness. There they will lie tranquilly till they are picked up by their less intoxicated friends, or more probably till they awake of their own accord next morning.

As a whole, a village fête in Russia is a saddening spectacle. It affords a new proof—where, alas! no new proof was required—that we northern nations, who know so well how to work, have not yet learned the art of amusing ourselves.

If the Russian peasant's food were always as good and plentiful as at this season of the year, he would have little reason to complain; but this is by no means the case. Gradually, as the harvest-time recedes, it deteriorates in quality, and sometimes diminishes in quantity. Besides this, during a great part of the year the peasant is prevented by the rules of the Church from using much that he possesses.

In southern climes, where these rules were elaborated and first practised, the prescribed fasts are perhaps useful not only in a religious, but also in a sanitary sense. Having abundance of fruit and vegetables, the inhabitants do well to abstain occasionally from animal food. But in countries like Northern and Central Russia, the influence of these rules is very different. The Russian peasant cannot get as much animal food as he requires, whilst sour cabbage and cucumbers are probably the only vegetables he can procure, and fruit of any kind is for him an unattainable luxury. Under these circumstances, abstinence from eggs and milk in all their forms during several months of the year seems to the secular mind a superfluous bit of asceticism. If the Church would direct her maternal solicitude to the peasant's drinking, and leave him to eat what he pleases, she might exercise a beneficial influence on his material and moral welfare. Unfortunately she has a great deal too much inherent immobility to attempt anything of the kind, so the muzhik, while free to drink copiously whenever he gets the chance, must fast during the seven weeks of Lent, during two or three weeks in June, from the beginning of November till Christmas, and on all Wednesdays and Fridays during the remainder of the year.

From the festival time till the following spring there is no possibility of doing any agricultural work, for the ground is hard as iron, and covered with a deep layer of snow. The male peasants, therefore, who remain in the villages, have very little to do, and may spend the greater part of their time in lying idly on the stove, unless they happen to have learned some handicraft that can be practised at home. Formerly, many of them were employed in transporting the grain to the market town, which might be several

hundred miles distant; but now this species of occupation has been greatly diminished by the extension of railways.

Another winter occupation which was formerly practised, and has now almost fallen into disuse, was that of stealing wood in the forest. This was, according to peasant morality, no sin, or at most a very venial offence, for God plants and waters the trees, and therefore forests belong properly to no one. So thought the peasantry, but the landed proprietors and the Administration of the Domains held a different theory of property, and consequently precautions had to be taken to avoid detection. In order to ensure success it was necessary to choose a night when there was a violent snowstorm, which would immediately obliterate all traces of the expedition; and when such a night was found, the operation was commonly performed with success. During the hours of darkness a tree would be felled, stripped of its branches, dragged into the village, and cut up into firewood, and at sunrise the actors would be tranquilly sleeping on the stove as if they had spent the night at home. In recent years the judicial authorities have done much towards putting down this practice and eradicating the loose conceptions of property with which it was connected.

For the female part of the population the winter used to be a busy time, for it was during these four or five months that the spinning and weaving had to be done, but now the big factories, with their cheap methods of production, are rapidly killing the home industries, and the young girls are not learning to work at the jenny and the loom as their mothers and grandmothers did.

In many of the northern villages, where ancient usages happen to be preserved, the tedium of the long

winter evenings is relieved by so-called *Besêdy*, a word which signifies literally conversazioni. A *Besêda*, however, is not exactly a conversazione as we understand the term, but resembles rather what is by some ladies called a Dorcas meeting, with this essential difference, that those present work for themselves and not for any benevolent purpose. In some villages as many as three *Besêdy* regularly assemble about sunset: one for the children, the second for the young people, and the third for the matrons. Each of the three has its peculiar character. In the first, the children work and amuse themselves under the superintendence of an old woman, who trims the torch* and endeavours to keep order. The little girls spin flax in a primitive way without the aid of a jenny, and the boys, who are, on the whole, much less industrious, make simple bits of wicker-work. Formerly—I mean within my own recollection—many of them used to make rude shoes of plaited bark called *lapty*, but these are being rapidly supplanted by leather boots. These occupations do not prevent an almost incessant hum of talk, frequent discordant attempts to sing in chorus, and occasional quarrels requiring the energetic interference of the old woman who controls the proceedings. To amuse her noisy flock she sometimes relates to them, for the hundredth time, one of those wonderful old stories that lose nothing by repetition, and all listen to her attentively, as if they had never heard the story before.

The second *Besêda* is held in another house by the young people of a riper age. Here the workers are naturally more staid, less given to quarrelling, sing more in harmony, and require no one to look after them. Some people, however, might think

* The torch (*lutchina*) has now almost entirely disappeared and been replaced by the petroleum lamp.

that a chaperon or inspector of some kind would be by no means out of place, for a good deal of flirtation goes on, and, if village scandal is to be trusted, strict propriety in thought, word, and deed is not always observed. How far these reports are true I cannot pretend to say, for the presence of a stranger always acts on the company like the presence of a severe inspector. In the third *Besêda* there is always at least strict decorum. Here the married women work together and talk about their domestic concerns, enlivening the conversation occasionally by the introduction of little bits of village scandal.

Such is the ordinary life of the peasants who live by agriculture; but many of the villagers live occasionally or permanently in the towns. Probably the majority of the peasants in this region have at some period of their lives gained a living elsewhere. Many of the absentees spend yearly a few months at home, whilst others visit their families only occasionally, and, it may be, at long intervals. In no case, however, do they sever their connection with their native village. Even the peasant who becomes a rich merchant and settles permanently with his family in Moscow or St. Petersburg remains probably a member of the Village Commune, and pays his share of the taxes, though he does not enjoy any of the corresponding privileges. Once I remember asking a rich man of this kind, the proprietor of several large houses in St. Petersburg, why he did not free himself from all connection with his native Commune, with which he had no longer any interests in common. His answer was, "It is all very well to be free, and I don't want anything from the Commune now; but my old father lives there, my mother is buried there, and I like to go back to the old place sometimes. Besides, I have children, and our affairs are com-

mercial (*nashé dyelo torgovoe*). Who knows but my children may be very glad some day to have a share of the Communal land?"

In respect to these non-agricultural occupations, each district has its specialty. The province of Yaroslavl, for instance, supplies the large towns with waiters for the *traktirs*, or lower class of restaurants, whilst the best hotels in Petersburg are supplied by the Tartars of Kasímof, celebrated for their sobriety and honesty. One part of the province of Kostromá has a special reputation for producing carpenters and stove-builders, whilst another part, as I once discovered to my surprise, sends yearly to Siberia—not as convicts, but as free labourers—a large contingent of tailors and workers in felt! On questioning some youngsters who were accompanying as apprentices one of these bands, I was informed by a bright-eyed youth of about sixteen that he had already made the journey twice, and intended to go every winter. "And you always bring home a big pile of money with you?" I inquired. "Nitchevo!" replied the little fellow, gaily, with an air of pride and self-confidence; "last year I brought home three roubles!" This answer was, at the moment, not altogether welcome, for I had just been discussing with a Russian fellow-traveller as to whether the peasantry can fairly be called industrious, and the boy's reply enabled my antagonist to score a point against me. "You hear that!" he said, triumphantly. "A Russian peasant goes all the way to Siberia and back for three roubles! Could you get an Englishman to work at that rate?" "Perhaps not," I replied, evasively, thinking at the same time that if a youth were sent several times from Land's End to John o' Groat's House, and obliged to make the greater part of the journey in carts or on foot, he would probably expect, by way of remunera-

tion for the time and labour expended, rather more than seven and sixpence!

Very often the peasants find industrial occupations without leaving home, for various industries which do not require complicated machinery are practised in the villages by the peasants and their families. Wooden vessels, wrought iron, pottery, leather, rush-matting, and numerous other articles are thus produced in enormous quantities. Occasionally we find not only a whole village, but even a whole district occupied almost exclusively with some one kind of manual industry. In the province of Vladimir, for example, a large group of villages live by Icon-painting; in one locality near Nizhni-Novgorod, nineteen villages are occupied with the manufacture of axes; round about Pavlovo, in the same province, eighty villages produce almost nothing but cutlery; and in a locality called Ouloma, on the borders of Novgorod and Tver, no less than two hundred villages live by nail-making.

These domestic industries have long existed, and were formerly an abundant source of revenue—providing a certain compensation for the poverty of the soil. But at present they are in a very critical position. They belong to the primitive period of economic development, and that period in Russia, as I shall explain in a future chapter, is now rapidly drawing to a close. Formerly the Head of a Household bought the raw material, had it worked up at home, and sold with a reasonable profit the manufactured articles at the bazaars, as the local fairs are called, or perhaps at the great annual *yarmarka** of Nizhni-Novgorod. This primitive system is now rapidly becoming obsolete. Capital and wholesale enterprise have come into the field, and are revolutionising the old methods of production and trade. Already whole groups of

* This term is a corruption of the German word *Jahrmarkt*.

industrial villages have fallen under the power of middle-men, who advance money to the working households and fix the price of the products. Attempts are frequently made to break their power by voluntary co-operative associations, organised by the local authorities or benevolent landed proprietors of the neighbourhood—like the benevolent people in England who try to preserve the traditional cottage industries—and some of the associations work very well; but the ultimate success of such "efforts to stem the current of capitalism" is extremely doubtful. At the same time, the periodical bazaars and *yarmarki*, at which producers and consumers transacted their affairs without mediation, are being replaced by permanent stores and by various classes of tradesmen—wholesale and retail.

To the political economist of the rigidly orthodox school this important change may afford great satisfaction. According to his theories it is a gigantic step in the right direction, and must necessarily redound to the advantage of all parties concerned. The producer now receives a regular supply of raw material, and regularly disposes of the articles manufactured; and the time and trouble which he formerly devoted to wandering about in search of customers he can now employ more profitably in productive work. The creation of a class between the producers and the consumers is an important step towards that division and specialisation of labour which is a necessary condition of industrial and commercial prosperity. The consumer no longer requires to go on a fixed day to some distant point, on the chance of finding there what he requires, but can always buy what he pleases in the permanent stores. Above all, the production is greatly increased in amount, and the price of manufactured goods is proportionally lessened.

All this seems clear enough in theory, and anyone who values intellectual tranquillity will feel disposed to accept this view of the case without questioning its accuracy; but the unfortunate traveller who is obliged to use his eyes as well as his logical faculties may find some little difficulty in making the facts fit into the *à priori* formula. Far be it from me to question the wisdom of political economists, but I cannot refrain from remarking that of the three classes concerned—small producers, middle-men, and consumers—two fail to perceive and appreciate the benefits which have been conferred upon them. The small producers complain that on the new system they work more and gain less; and the consumers complain that the manufactured articles, if cheaper and more showy in appearance, are far inferior in quality. The middle-men, who are accused, rightly or wrongly, of taking for themselves the lion's share of the profits, alone seem satisfied with the new arrangement.

Interesting as this question undoubtedly is, it is not of permanent importance, because the present state of things is merely transitory. Though the peasants may continue for a time to work at home for the wholesale dealers, they cannot in the long run compete with the big factories and workshops, organised on the European model with steam-power and complicated machinery, which already exist in many provinces. Once a country has begun to move forward on the great highway of economic progress, there is no possibility of stopping halfway.

Here again the orthodox economists find reason for congratulation, because big factories and workshops are the cheapest and most productive form of manufacturing industry; and again, the observant traveller cannot shut his eyes to ugly facts which force themselves on his attention. He notices that this

cheapest and most productive form of manufacturing industry does not seem to advance the material and moral welfare of the population. Nowhere is there more disease, drunkenness, demoralisation and misery than in the manufacturing districts.

The reader must not imagine that in making these statements I wish to calumniate the spirit of modern enterprise, or to advocate a return to primitive barbarism. All great changes produce a mixture of good and evil, and at first the evil is pretty sure to come prominently forward. Russia is at this moment in a state of transition, and the new condition of things is not yet properly organised. With improved organisation many of the existing evils will disappear. Already in recent years I have noticed sporadic signs of improvement. When factories were first established no proper arrangements were made for housing and feeding the workmen, and the consequent hardships were specially felt when the factories were founded, as is often the case, in rural districts. Now, the richer and more enterprising manufacturers build large barracks for the workmen and their families, and provide them with common kitchens, wash-houses, steam-baths, schools, and similar requisites of civilised life. At the same time the Government appoints inspectors to superintend the sanitary arrangements and see that the health and comfort of the workers are properly attended to.

On the whole, we must assume that the activity of these inspectors tends to improve the condition of the working classes. Certainly in some instances it has that effect. I remember, for example, some thirty years ago, visiting a lucifer-match factory in which the hands employed worked habitually in an atmosphere impregnated with the fumes of phosphorus, which produce insidious and very painful diseases.

Such a thing is hardly possible nowadays. On the other hand, official inspection, like Factory Acts, everywhere gives rise to a good deal of dissatisfaction, and does not always improve the relations between employers and employed. Some of the Russian inspectors, if I may credit the testimony of employers, are young gentlemen imbued with socialist notions, who intentionally stir up discontent or who make mischief from inexperience. An amusing illustration of the current complaints came under my notice when, in 1903, I was visiting a landed proprietor of the southern provinces, who has a large sugar factory on his estate. The inspector objected to the traditional custom of the men sleeping in large dormitories, and insisted on sleeping-cots being constructed for them individually. As soon as the change was made the workmen came to the proprietor to complain, and put their grievance in an interrogative form: "Are we cattle that we should be thus cooped up in stalls?"

To return to the northern agricultural region, the rural population have a peculiar type, which is to be accounted for by the fact that they never experienced to its full extent the demoralising influence of serfage. A large proportion of them were settled on State domains and were governed by a special branch of the Imperial administration, whilst others lived on the estates of rich absentee landlords, who were in the habit of leaving the management of their properties to a steward acting under a code of instructions. In either case, though serfs in the eye of the law, they enjoyed practically a very large amount of liberty. By paying a small sum for a passport they could leave their villages for an indefinite period, and as long as they sent home regularly the money required for taxes and dues, they were in little danger of being molested. Many of them, though officially inscribed as domiciled

in their native communes, lived permanently in the towns, and not a few succeeded in amassing large fortunes. The effect of this comparative freedom is apparent even at the present day. These peasants of the north are more energetic, more intelligent, more independent, and consequently less docile and pliable than those of the fertile central provinces. They have, too, more education. A large proportion of them can read and write, and occasionally one meets among them men who have a keen desire for knowledge. Several times I encountered peasants in this region who had a small collection of books, and twice I found in such collections, much to my astonishment, a Russian translation of Buckle's "History of Civilisation."

How, it may be asked, did a work of this sort find its way to such a place? If the reader will pardon a short digression, I will explain the fact.

Immediately after the Crimean War there was a curious intellectual movement—of which I shall have more to say hereafter—among the Russian educated classes. The movement assumed various forms, of which two of the most prominent were a desire for encyclopædic knowledge, and an attempt to reduce all knowledge to a scientific form. For men in this state of mind, Buckle's great work had naturally a powerful fascination. It seemed at first sight to reduce the multifarious conflicting facts of human history to a few simple principles, and to evolve order out of chaos. Its success, therefore, was great. In the course of a few years no less than four independent translations were published and sold. Everyone read, or at least professed to have read, the wonderful book, and many believed that its author was the greatest genius of his time. During the first year of my residence in Russia (1870) I rarely had a serious conversation

without hearing Buckle's name mentioned; and my friends almost always assumed that he had succeeded in creating a genuine science of history on the inductive method. In vain I pointed out that Buckle had merely thrown out some hints in his introductory chapter as to how such a science ought to be constructed, and that he had himself made no serious attempt to use the method which he commended. My objections had little or no effect: the belief was too deep-rooted to be so easily eradicated. In books periodicals, newspapers, and professional lectures, the name of Buckle was constantly cited—often violently dragged in without the slightest reason—and the cheap translations of his work were sold in enormous quantities. It is not, then, so very wonderful after all that the book should have found its way to two villages in the province of Yaroslavl.

The enterprising, self-reliant, independent spirit which is often to be found among those peasants manifests itself occasionally in amusing forms among the young generation. Often in this part of the country I have encountered boys who recalled young America rather than young Russia. One of these young hopefuls I remembered well. I was waiting at a post-station for the horses to be changed, when he appeared before me in a sheep-skin, fur cap, and gigantic double-soled boots—all of which articles had been made on a scale adapted to future rather than actual requirements. He must have stood in his boots about three feet eight inches, and he could not have been more than twelve years of age; but he had already learned to look upon life as a serious business, wore a commanding air, and knitted his innocent little brows as if the cares of an empire weighed on his diminutive shoulders. Though he was to act as *yamstchik*, he had to leave the putting in of the

horses to larger specimens of the human species, but he took care that all was done properly. Putting one of his big boots a little in advance, and drawing himself up to his full shortness, he watched the operation attentively, as if the smallness of his stature had nothing to do with his inactivity. When all was ready, he climbed up to his seat, and at a signal from the station-keeper, who watched with paternal pride all the movements of the little prodigy, we dashed off at a pace rarely attained by post-horses. He had the faculty of emitting a peculiar sound—something between a whirr and a whistle—that appeared to have a magical effect on the team, and every few minutes he employed this incentive. The road was rough, and at every jolt he was shot upwards into the air, but he always fell back into his proper position, and never lost for a moment his self-possession or his balance. At the end of the journey I found we had made nearly fourteen miles within the hour.

Unfortunately this energetic, enterprising spirit sometimes takes an illegitimate direction. Not only whole villages, but even whole districts have in this way acquired a bad reputation for robbery, the manufacture of paper-money, and similar offences against the criminal law. In popular parlance, these localities are said to contain "people who play pranks" (*naród shalít*). I must, however, remark that, if I may judge by my own experience, these so-called "playful" tendencies are greatly exaggerated. Though I have travelled hundreds of miles at night on lonely roads, I was never robbed or in any way molested. Once, indeed, when travelling at night in a *tarantass*, I discovered on awaking that my driver was bending over me, and had introduced his hand into one of my pockets; but the incident ended without serious consequences. When I caught the delinquent hand, and

demanded an explanation from the owner, he replied, in an apologetic, caressing tone, that the night was cold, and he wished to warm his fingers; and when I advised him to use for that purpose his own pockets rather than mine, he promised to act in future according to my advice. More than once, it is true, I believed that I was in danger of being attacked, but on every occasion my fears turned out to be unfounded, and sometimes the catastrophe was ludicrous rather than tragical. Let the following serve as an illustration.

I had occasion to traverse, in company with a Russian friend, the country lying to the east of the river Vetluga—a land of forest and morass, with here and there a patch of cultivation. The majority of the population are Tcheremiss, a Finnish tribe; but near the banks of the river there are villages of Russian peasants, and these latter have the reputation of "playing pranks." When we were on the point of starting from Kozmodemiansk, a town on the bank of the Volga, we received a visit from an officer of rural police, who painted in very sombre colours the habits and moral character—or, more properly, immoral character—of the people whose acquaintance we were about to make. He related with melodramatic gesticulation his encounters with malefactors belonging to the villages through which we had to pass, and ended the interview with a strong recommendation to us not to travel at night, and to keep at all times our eyes open and our revolver ready. The effect of his narrative was considerably diminished by the prominence of the moral, which was to the effect that there never had been a police officer who had shown so much zeal, energy, and courage in the discharge of his duty as the worthy man before us. We considered it, however, advisable to remember his hint about keeping our eyes open.

In spite of our intention of being very cautious, it was already dark when we arrived at the village which was to be our halting-place for the night, and it seemed at first as if we should be obliged to spend the night in the open air. The inhabitants had already retired to rest, and refused to open their doors to unknown travellers. At length an old woman, more hospitable than her neighbours, or more anxious to earn an honest penny, consented to let us pass the night in an outer apartment (*seni*), and this permission we gladly accepted. Mindful of the warnings of the police officer, we barricaded the two doors and the window, and the precaution was evidently not superfluous, for almost as soon as the light was extinguished, we could hear that an attempt was being made stealthily to effect an entrance. Notwithstanding my efforts to remain awake and on the watch, I at last fell asleep, and was suddenly aroused by someone grasping me tightly by the arm. Instantly I sprang to my feet and endeavoured to close with my invisible assailant. In vain! He dexterously eluded my grasp, and I stumbled over my portmanteau, which was lying on the floor; but my prompt action revealed who the intruder was, by producing a wild flutter and a frantic cackling! Before my companion could strike a light the mysterious attack was fully explained. The supposed midnight robber and possible assassin was simply a peaceable hen that had gone to roost on my arm, and, on finding her position unsteady, had dug her claws into what she mistook for a roosting pole!

When speaking of the peasantry of the north I have hitherto had in view the inhabitants of the provinces of Old-Novgorod, Tver, Yaroslavl, Nizhni-Novgorod, Kostroma, Kazan, and Viatka, and I have

founded my remarks chiefly on information collected on the spot. Beyond this lies what may be called the Far North. Though I cannot profess to have the same personal acquaintance with the peasantry of that region, I may perhaps be allowed to insert here some information regarding them which I collected from various trustworthy sources.

If we draw a wavy line eastward from a point a little to the north of St. Petersburg, as is shown in the map appended to the second volume, we shall have between that line and the Polar Ocean what may be regarded as a distinct, peculiar region, differing in many respects from the rest of Russia. Throughout the whole of it the climate is very severe. For about half of the year the ground is covered by deep snow, and the rivers are frozen. By far the greater part of the land is occupied by forests of pine, fir, larch, and birch, or by vast, unfathomable morasses. The arable land and pasturage taken together form only about one and a half per cent. of the area. The population is scarce—little more than one to the English square mile—and settled chiefly along the banks of the rivers. The peasantry support themselves by fishing, hunting, felling and floating timber, preparing tar and charcoal, cattle-breeding, and, in the extreme north, breeding reindeer.

These are their chief occupations, but the people do not entirely neglect agriculture. They make the most of their short summer by means of a peculiar and ingenious mode of farming, well adapted to the peculiar local conditions. The peasant knows of course nothing about agronomical chemistry, but he, as well as his forefathers, have observed that if wood be burnt on a field, and the ashes be mixed with the soil, a good harvest may be confidently expected. On this simple principle his system of farming is based. When spring

comes round and the leaves begin to appear on the trees, a band of peasants, armed with their hatchets, proceed to some spot in the woods previously fixed upon. Here they begin to make a clearing. This is no easy matter, for tree-felling is hard and tedious work; but the process does not take so much time as might be expected, for the workmen have been brought up to the trade, and wield their axes with marvellous dexterity. When they have felled all the trees, great and small, they return to their homes, and think no more about their clearing till the autumn, when they return, in order to strip the fallen trees of their branches, to pick out what they require for building purposes or firewood, and to pile up the remainder in heaps. The logs for building or firewood are dragged away by horses as soon as the first fall of snow has made a good slippery road, but the piles are allowed to remain till the following spring, when they are stirred up with long poles and ignited. The flames rapidly spread in all directions till they join together and form a gigantic bonfire, such as is never seen in more densely populated countries. If the fire does its work properly, the whole of the space is covered with a layer of ashes; and when these have been slightly mixed with soil by means of a light plough, the seed is sown.

On the field prepared in this original fashion is sown barley, rye, or flax; and the harvests, nearly always good, sometimes border on the miraculous. Barley or rye may be expected to produce about sixfold in ordinary years, and they may produce as much as thirtyfold under peculiarly favourable circumstances. The fertility is, however, short-lived. If the soil is poor and stony, not more than two crops can be raised; if it is of a better quality, it may give tolerable harvests for six or seven successive years. In most countries

this would be an absurdly expensive way of manuring, for wood is much too valuable a commodity to be used for such a purpose; but in this northern region the forests are boundless, and in the districts where there is no river or stream by which timber may be floated, the trees not used in this way rot from old age. Under these circumstances the system is reasonable, but it must be admitted that it does not give a very large return for the amount of labour expended, and in bad seasons it gives almost no return at all.

The other sources of revenue are scarcely less precarious. With his gun and a little parcel of provisions, the peasant wanders about in the trackless forests, and too often returns after many days with a very light bag; or he starts in autumn for some distant lake, and comes back after five or six weeks with nothing better than perch and pike. Sometimes he tries his luck at deep-sea fishing. In this case he starts in February—probably on foot—for Kem, on the shore of the White Sea, or perhaps for the more distant Kola, situated on a small river which falls into the Arctic Ocean. There, in company with three or four comrades, he starts on a fishing cruise along the Murman coast, or, it may be, off the coast of Spitzbergen. His gains will depend on the amount caught, for it is a joint venture; but in no case can they be very great, for three-fourths of the fish brought into port belongs to the owner of the craft and tackle. Of the sum realised, he brings home perhaps only a small part, for he has a strong temptation to buy rum, tea, and other luxuries, which are very dear in those northern latitudes. If the fishing is good and he resists temptation, he may save as much as 100 roubles —about £10—and thereby live comfortably all winter; but if the fishing season is bad, he may find himself at the end of it not only with empty pockets, but in debt to the owner of the boat. This debt he may pay off,

if he has a horse, by transporting the dried fish to Kargopol, St. Petersburg, or some other market.

It is here in the Far North that the ancient folk-lore—popular songs, stories, and fragments of epic poetry—has been best preserved; but this is a field on which I need not enter, for the reader can easily find all that he may desire to know on the subject in the brilliant writings of M. Rambaud and the very interesting, conscientious works of the late Mr. Ralston,* which enjoy a high reputation in Russia.

* Rambaud, "La Russie Épique," Paris, 1876; Ralston, "The Songs of the Russian People," London, 1872; and "Russian Folk-Tales," London, 1873.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIR, OR VILLAGE COMMUNITY.

Social and Political Importance of the *Mir*—The *Mir* and the Family compared—Theory of the Communal System—Practical Deviations from the Theory—The *Mir* a Good Specimen of Constitutional Government of the Extreme Democratic Type—The Village Assembly—Female Members—The Elections—Distribution of the Communal Land.

WHEN I had gained a clear notion of the family life and occupations of the peasantry, I turned my attention to the constitution of the village. This was a subject which specially interested me, because I was aware that the *Mir* is the most peculiar of Russian institutions. Long before visiting Russia I had looked into Haxthausen's celebrated work, by which the peculiarities of the Russian village system were first made known to Western Europe, and during my stay in St. Petersburg I had often been informed by intelligent, educated Russians that the rural Commune presented a practical solution of many difficult social problems with which the philosophers and statesmen of the West had long been vainly struggling. "The nations of the West"—such was the substance of innumerable discourses which I had heard—"are at present on the high road to political and social anarchy, and England has the unenviable distinction of being foremost in the race. The natural increase of population, together with the expropriation of the small landholders by the great landed proprietors, has created a dangerous and ever-increasing Proletariat—a great disorganised mass of human beings, without homes, without permanent domicile, without property of any kind, without any stake in the existing insti-

tutions. Part of these gain a miserable pittance as agricultural labourers, and live in a condition infinitely worse than serfage. The others have been for ever uprooted from the soil, and have collected in the large towns, where they earn a precarious living in the factories and workshops, or swell the ranks of the criminal classes. In England you have no longer a peasantry in the proper sense of the term, and unless some radical measures be very soon adopted, you will never be able to create such a class, for men who have been long exposed to the unwholesome influences of town life are physically and morally incapable of becoming agriculturists.

"Hitherto," the disquisition proceeded, "England has enjoyed, in consequence of her geographical position, her political freedom, and her vast natural deposits of coal and iron, a wholly exceptional position in the industrial world. Fearing no competition, she has proclaimed the principles of Free Trade, and has inundated the world with her manufactures—using unscrupulously her powerful navy and all the other forces at her command for breaking down every barrier tending to check the flood sent forth from Manchester and Birmingham. In that way her hungry Proletariat has been fed. But the industrial supremacy of England is drawing to a close. The nations have discovered the perfidious fallacy of Free Trade principles, and are now learning to manufacture for their own wants, instead of paying England enormous sums to manufacture for them. Very soon English goods will no longer find foreign markets, and how will the hungry Proletariat then be fed? Already the grain production of England is far from sufficient for the wants of the population, so that, even when the harvest is exceptionally abundant, enormous quantities of wheat are

imported from all quarters of the globe. Hitherto this grain has been paid for by the manufactured goods annually exported, but how will it be procured when these goods are no longer wanted by foreign consumers? And what then will the hungry Proletariat do?"*

This sombre picture of England's future had often been presented to me, and on nearly every occasion I had been assured that Russia had been saved from these terrible evils by the rural Commune—an institution which, in spite of its simplicity and incalculable utility, West-Europeans seemed utterly incapable of understanding and appreciating.

The reader will now easily conceive with what interest I took to studying this wonderful institution, and with what energy I prosecuted my researches. An institution which professes to solve satisfactorily the most difficult social problems of the future is not to be met with every day, even in Russia, which is specially rich in material for the student of social science.

On my arrival at Ivánofka my knowledge of the institution was of that vague, superficial kind which is commonly derived from men who are fonder of sweeping generalisations and rhetorical declamation than of serious, patient study of phenomena. I knew that the chief personage in a Russian village is the *Sélski Stárosta*, or Village Elder, and that all important Communal affairs are regulated by the *Sélski Skhod*, or Village Assembly. Further, I was aware that the land in the vicinity of the village belongs to the Commune, and is distributed periodically among the members in such a way that every able-bodied

* This passage was written, precisely as it stands, long before the fiscal question was raised by Mr. Chamberlain. It will be found in the first edition of this work, published in 1877. (Vol. I., pp. 179–81.)

peasant possesses a share sufficient, or nearly sufficient, for his maintenance. Beyond this elementary information I knew little or nothing.

My first attempt at extending my knowledge was not very successful. Hoping that my friend Ivan might be able to assist me, and knowing that the popular name for the Commune is *Mir*, which means also "the world," I put to him the direct, simple question, "What is the Mir?"

Ivan was not easily disconcerted, but for once he looked puzzled, and stared at me vacantly. When I endeavoured to explain to him my question, he simply knitted his brows and scratched the back of his head. This latter movement is the Russian peasant's method of accelerating cerebral action; but in the present instance it had no practical result. In spite of his efforts, Ivan could not get much further than the "Kak vam skazat'?" that is to say, "How am I to tell you?"

It was not difficult to perceive that I had adopted an utterly false method of investigation, and a moment's reflection sufficed to show me the absurdity of my question. I had asked from an uneducated man a philosophical definition, instead of extracting from him material in the form of concrete facts, and constructing therefrom a definition for myself. These concrete facts Ivan was both able and willing to supply; and as soon as I adopted a rational mode of questioning, I obtained from him all I wanted. The information he gave me, together with the results of much subsequent conversation and reading, I now propose to present to the reader in my own words.

The peasant family of the old type is, as we have just seen, a kind of primitive association, in which the members have nearly all things in common. The

village may be roughly described as a primitive association on a larger scale.

Between these two social units there are many points of analogy. In both there are common interests and common responsibilities. In both there is a principal personage, who is in a certain sense ruler within, and representative as regards the outside world: in the one case called *Khozaïn*, or Head of the Household, and in the other *Stárosta*, or Village Elder. In both the authority of the ruler is limited: in the one case by the adult members of the family, and in the other by the Heads of Households. In both there is a certain amount of common property: in the one case the house and nearly all that it contains, and in the other the arable land and possibly a little pasturage. In both cases there is a certain amount of common responsibility: in the one case for all the debts, and in the other for all the taxes and Communal obligations. And both are protected to a certain extent against the ordinary legal consequences of insolvency, for the family cannot be deprived of its house or necessary agricultural implements, and the Commune cannot be deprived of its land, by importunate creditors.

On the other hand, there are many important points of contrast. The Commune is, of course, much larger than the family, and the mutual relations of its members are by no means so closely interwoven. The members of a family all farm together, and those of them who earn money from other sources are expected to put their savings into the common purse; whilst the households composing a Commune farm independently, and pay into the common treasury only a certain fixed sum.

From these brief remarks the reader will at once perceive that a Russian village is something very

different from a village in our sense of the term, and that the villagers are bound together by ties quite unknown to the English rural population. A family living in an English village has little reason to take an interest in the affairs of its neighbours. The isolation of the individual families is never quite perfect, for man, being a social animal, takes necessarily a certain interest in the affairs of those around him, and this social duty is sometimes fulfilled by the weaker sex with more zeal than is absolutely indispensable to the public welfare; but families may live for many years in the same village without ever becoming conscious of common interests. So long as the Jones family do not commit any culpable breach of public order, such as putting obstructions on the highway or habitually setting their house on fire, their neighbour Brown takes probably no interest in their affairs, and has no ground for interfering with their perfect liberty of action. Amongst the families composing a Russian village, such a state of isolation is impossible. The Heads of Households must often meet together and consult in the Village Assembly, and their daily occupations must be influenced by the Communal decrees. They cannot begin to mow the hay or plough the fallow field until the Village Assembly has passed a resolution on the subject. If a peasant becomes a drunkard, or takes some equally efficient means to become insolvent, every family in the village has a right to complain, not merely in the interests of public morality, but from selfish motives, because all the families are collectively responsible for his taxes.* For the same reason no peasant can per-

* This common responsibility for the taxes was abolished in 1903 by the Emperor, on the advice of M. Witte, and the other Communal fetters are being gradually relaxed. A peasant may now, if he wishes, cease to be a member of the Commune altogether, as soon as he has defrayed all his outstanding obligations.

manently leave the village without the consent of the Commune, and this consent will not be granted until the applicant gives satisfactory security for the fulfilment of his actual and future liabilities. If a peasant wishes to go away for a short time, in order to work elsewhere, he must obtain a written permission, which serves him as a passport during his absence; and he may be recalled at any moment by a Communal decree. In reality he is rarely recalled so long as he sends home regularly the full amount of his taxes—including the dues which he has to pay for the temporary passport—but sometimes the Commune uses the power of recall for purposes of extortion. If it becomes known, for instance, that an absent member is receiving a good salary or otherwise making money, he may one day receive a formal order to return at once to his native village, but he is probably informed at the same time, unofficially, that his presence will be dispensed with if he will send to the Commune a certain specified sum. The money thus sent is generally used by the Commune for convivial purposes.*

In all countries the theory of government and administration differs considerably from the actual practice. Nowhere is this difference greater than in Russia, and in no Russian institution is it greater than in the Village Commune. It is necessary, therefore, to know both theory and practice; and it is well to begin with the former, because it is the simpler of the two. When we have once thoroughly mastered the theory, it is easy to understand the deviations that are made to suit peculiar local conditions.

According, then, to theory, all male peasants in every part of the Empire are inscribed in census lists,

* With the relaxing of the Communal fetters, referred to in the foregoing note, this abuse should disappear.

which form the basis of the direct taxation. These lists are revised at irregular intervals, and all males alive at the time of the "revision," from the new-born babe to the centenarian, are duly inscribed. Each Commune has a list of this kind, and pays to the Government an annual sum proportionate to the number of names which the list contains, or, in popular language, according to the number of "revision souls." During the intervals between the revisions the financial authorities take no notice of the births and deaths. A Commune which has a hundred male members at the time of the revision may have in a few years considerably more or considerably less than that number, but it has to pay taxes for a hundred members all the same until a new revision is made for the whole Empire.

Now in Russia, so far at least as the rural population is concerned, the payment of taxes is inseparably connected with the possession of land. Every peasant who pays taxes is supposed to have a share of the land belonging to the Commune. If the Communal revision lists contain a hundred names, the Communal land ought to be divided into a hundred shares, and each "revision soul" should enjoy his share in return for the taxes which he pays.

The reader who has followed my explanations up to this point may naturally conclude that the taxes paid by the peasants are in reality a species of rent for the land which they enjoy. Such a conclusion would not be altogether justified. When a man rents a bit of land he acts according to his own judgment, and makes a voluntary contract with the proprietor; but the Russian peasant is obliged to pay his taxes whether he desires to enjoy land or not. The theory, therefore, that the taxes are simply the rent of the land, will not bear even superficial examination.

Equally untenable is the theory that they are a species of land tax. In any reasonable system of land dues the yearly sum imposed bears some kind of proportion to the quantity and quality of the land enjoyed; but in Russia it may be that the members of one Commune possess six acres of bad land, and the members of the neighbouring Commune seven acres of good land, and yet the taxes in both cases are the same. The truth is that the taxes are personal, and are calculated according to the number of male "souls," and the Government does not take the trouble to inquire how the Communal land is distributed. The Commune has to pay into the Imperial Treasury a fixed yearly sum, according to the number of its "revision souls," and distributes the land among its members as it thinks fit.

How, then, does the Commune distribute the land? To this question it is impossible to reply in brief, general terms, because each Commune acts as it pleases?* Some act strictly according to the theory. These divide their land at the time of the revision into a number of portions or shares corresponding to the number of revision souls, and give to each family a number of shares corresponding to the number of revision souls which it contains. This is from the administrative point of view by far the simplest system. The census list determines how much land each family will enjoy, and the existing tenures are disturbed only by the revisions which take place at irregular intervals.† But, on the other hand, this

* A long list of the various systems of allotment to be found in individual Communes in different parts of the country is given in the opening chapter of a valuable work by Karélin, entitled *Obshtchinnoye Vladênié v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1893). As my object is to convey to the reader merely a general idea of the institution, I refrain from confusing him by an enumeration of the endless divergences from the original type.

† Since 1719 eleven revisions have been made, the last in 1897. The intervals varied from six to forty-one years.

system has serious defects. The revision list represents merely the numerical strength of the families, and the numerical strength is often not at all in proportion to the working power. Let us suppose, for example, two families, each containing at the time of the revision five male members. According to the census list these two families are equal, and ought to receive equal shares of the land; but in reality it may happen that the one contains a father in the prime of life and four able-bodied sons, whilst the other contains a widow and five little boys. The wants and working power of these two families are of course very different; and if the above system of distribution be applied, the man with four sons and a goodly supply of grandchildren will probably find that he has too little land, whilst the widow with her five little boys will find it difficult to cultivate the five shares allotted to her, and utterly impossible to pay the corresponding amount of taxation — for in all cases, it must be remembered, the Communal burdens are distributed in the same proportion as the land.

But why, it may be said, should the widow not accept provisionally the five shares, and let to others the part which she does not require? The balance of rent after payment of the taxes might help her to bring up her young family.

So it seems to one acquainted only with the rural economy of England, where land is scarce, and always gives a revenue more than sufficient to defray the taxes. But in Russia the possession of a share of Communal land is often not a privilege, but a burden. In some Communes the land is so poor and abundant that it cannot be let at any price. In others the soil will repay cultivation, but a fair rent will not suffice to pay the taxes and dues.

To obviate these inconvenient results of the simpler system, many Communes have adopted the expedient of allotting the land, not according to the number of revision souls, but according to the working power of the families. Thus, in the instance above supposed, the widow would receive perhaps two shares, and the large household, containing five workers, would receive perhaps seven or eight. Since the breaking up of the large families, such inequality as I have supposed is, of course, rare; but inequality of a less extreme kind does still occur, and justifies a departure from the system of allotment according to the revision lists.

Even if the allotment be fair and equitable at the time of the revision, it may soon become unfair and burdensome by the natural fluctuations of the population. Births and deaths may in the course of a very few years entirely alter the relative working power of the various families. The sons of the widow may grow up to manhood, whilst two or three able-bodied members of the other family may be cut off by an epidemic. Thus, long before a new revision takes place, the distribution of the land may be no longer in accordance with the wants and capacities of the various families composing the Commune. To correct this, various expedients are employed. Some Communes transfer particular lots from one family to another, as circumstances demand; whilst others make from time to time, during the intervals between the revisions, a complete redistribution and re-allotment of the land. Of these two systems the former is now the more frequently employed.

The system of allotment adopted depends entirely on the will of the particular Commune. In this respect the Communes enjoy the most complete autonomy, and no peasant ever dreams of appealing

against a Communal decree.* The higher authorities not only abstain from all interference in the allotment of the Communal lands, but remain in profound ignorance as to which system the Communes habitually adopt. Though the Imperial Administration has a most voracious appetite for symmetrically constructed statistical tables—many of them formed chiefly out of materials supplied by the mysterious inner consciousness of the subordinate officials—no attempt has yet been made, so far as I know, to collect statistical data which might throw light on this important subject. In spite of the systematic and persistent efforts of the centralised bureaucracy to regulate minutely all departments of the national life, the rural Communes, which contain about five-sixths of the population, remain in many respects entirely beyond its influence, and even beyond its sphere of vision! But let not the reader be astonished overmuch. He will learn in time that Russia is the land of paradoxes; and meanwhile he is about to receive a still more startling bit of information. In "the great stronghold of Cæsarian despotism and centralised bureaucracy," these Village Communes, containing about five-sixths of the population, are capital specimens of representative Constitutional government of the extreme democratic type!

When I say that the rural Commune is a good specimen of Constitutional government, I use the phrase in the English, and not in the Continental sense. In the Continental languages a Constitutional *régime* implies the existence of a long, formal document, in which the functions of the various institutions, the

* This has been somewhat modified by recent legislation. According to the Emancipation Law of 1861, redistribution of the land could take place at any time provided it was voted by a majority of two-thirds at the Village Assembly. By a law of 1893 redistribution cannot take place oftener than once in twelve years, and must receive the sanction of certain local authorities.

powers of the various authorities, and the methods of procedure are carefully defined. Such a document was never heard of in Russian Village Communes, except those belonging to the Imperial Domains, and the special legislation which formerly regulated their affairs was repealed at the time of the Emancipation. At the present day the Constitution of all the Village Communes is of the English type—a body of unwritten, traditional conceptions, which have grown up and modified themselves under the influence of ever-changing practical necessity. No doubt certain definitions of the functions and mutual relations of the Communal authorities might be extracted from the Emancipation Law and subsequent official documents, but as a rule neither the Village Elder nor the members of the Village Assembly ever heard of such definitions; and yet every peasant knows, as if by instinct, what each of these authorities can do and cannot do. The Commune is, in fact, a living institution, whose spontaneous vitality enables it to dispense with the assistance and guidance of the written law, and its constitution is thoroughly democratic. The Elder represents merely the executive power. The real authority resides in the Assembly, of which all Heads of Households are members.*

The simple procedure, or rather the absence of all formal procedure, at the Assemblies, illustrates admirably the essentially practical character of the institution. The meetings are held in the open air, because in the village there is no building—except the church, which can be used only for religious purposes—large enough to contain all the members; and they almost

* An attempt was made by Alexander III. in 1884 to bring the Rural Communes under supervision and control by the appointment of rural officials called *Zémskiye Natchálniki*. Of this so-called reform I shall have occasion to speak later.

always take place on Sundays or holidays, when the peasants have plenty of leisure. Any open space may serve as a Forum. The discussions are occasionally very animated, but there is rarely any attempt at speech-making. If any young member should show an inclination to indulge in oratory, he is sure to be unceremoniously interrupted by some of the older members, who have never any sympathy with fine talking. The assemblage has the appearance of a crowd of people who have accidentally come together, and are discussing in little groups subjects of local interest. Gradually some one group, containing two or three peasants who have more moral influence than their fellows, attracts the others, and the discussion becomes general. Two or more peasants may speak at a time, and interrupt each other freely—using plain, unvarnished language, not at all parliamentary—and the discussion may become a confused, unintelligible din; but at the moment when the spectator imagines that the consultation is about to be transformed into a free fight, the tumult spontaneously subsides, or perhaps a general roar of laughter announces that someone has been successfully hit by a strong *argumentum ad hominem*, or biting personal remark. In any case there is no danger of the disputants coming to blows. No class of men in the world are more good-natured and pacific than the Russian peasantry. When sober they never fight, and even when under the influence of alcohol they are more likely to be violently affectionate than disagreeably quarrelsome. If two of them take to drinking together, the probability is that in a few minutes, though they may never have seen each other before, they will be expressing in very strong terms their mutual regard and affection, confirming their words with an occasional friendly embrace.

Theoretically speaking, the Village Parliament has a Speaker, in the person of the Village Elder. The word Speaker is etymologically less objectionable than the term President, for the personage in question never sits down, but mingles in the crowd like the ordinary members. Objection may be taken to the word on the ground that the Elder speaks much less than many other members, but this may likewise be said of the Speaker of the House of Commons. Whatever we may call him, the Elder is officially the principal personage in the crowd, and wears the insignia of office in the form of a small medal suspended from his neck by a thin brass chain. His duties, however, are extremely light. To call to order those who interrupt the discussion is no part of his functions. If he calls an honourable member "Durák!" (blockhead), or interrupts an orator with a laconic "Moltchi!" (hold your tongue!), he does so in virtue of no special prerogative, but simply in accordance with a time-honoured privilege, which is equally enjoyed by all present, and may be employed with impunity against himself. Indeed, it may be said in general that the phraseology and the procedure are not subjected to any strict rules. The Elder comes prominently forward only when it is necessary to take the sense of the meeting. On such occasions he may stand back a little from the crowd and say, "Well, orthodox, have you decided so?" and the crowd will probably shout, "Ládno! ládno!" that is to say, "Agreed! agreed!"

Communal measures are generally carried in this way by acclamation; but it sometimes happens that there is such a diversity of opinion that it is difficult to tell which of the two parties has a majority. In this case the Elder requests the one party to stand to the right and the other to the left. The two groups

are then counted, and the minority submits, for no one ever dreams of opposing openly the will of the *Mir*.

During the reign of Nicholas I. an attempt was made to regulate by the written law the procedure of Village Assemblies amongst the peasantry of the State Domains, and among other reforms voting by ballot was introduced; but the new custom never struck root. The peasants did not regard with favour the new method, and persisted in calling it, contemptuously, "playing at marbles." Here, again, we have one of those wonderful and apparently anomalous facts which frequently meet the student of Russian affairs: the Emperor Nicholas I., the Incarnation of Autocracy and the champion of the Reactionary Party throughout Europe, forces the ballot-box, the ingenious invention of extreme radicals, on several millions of his subjects!

In the northern provinces, where a considerable portion of the male population is always absent, the Village Assembly generally includes a good many female members. These are women who, on account of the absence or death of their husbands, happen to be for the moment Heads of Households. As such they are entitled to be present, and their right to take part in the deliberations is never called in question. In matters affecting the general welfare of the Commune they rarely speak, and if they do venture to enounce an opinion on such occasions they have little chance of commanding attention, for the Russian peasantry are as yet little imbued with the modern doctrines of female equality, and express their opinion of female intelligence by the homely adage: "The hair is long, but the mind is short." According to one proverb, seven women have collectively but one soul, and according to a still more ungallant popular saying, women have no souls at all, but only a vapour.

Woman, therefore, as woman, is not deserving of much consideration, but a particular woman, as Head of a Household, is entitled to speak on all questions directly affecting the household under her care. If, for instance, it be proposed to increase or diminish her household's share of the land and the burdens, she will be allowed to speak freely on the subject, and even to indulge in personal invective against her male opponents. She thereby exposes herself, it is true, to uncomplimentary remarks; but any which she happens to receive she is pretty sure to repay with interest—referring, perhaps, with pertinent virulence to the domestic affairs of those who attack her. And when argument and invective fail, she can try the effect of pathetic appeal, supported by copious tears.

As the Village Assembly is really a representative institution in the full sense of the term, it reflects faithfully the good and the bad qualities of the rural population. Its decisions are therefore usually characterised by plain, practical common-sense, but it is subject to occasional unfortunate aberrations in consequence of pernicious influences, chiefly of an alcoholic kind. An instance of this fact occurred during my sojourn at Ivánofka. The question under discussion was whether a *kabák*, or gin-shop, should be established in the village. A trader from the district town desired to establish one, and offered to pay to the Commune a yearly sum for the necessary permission. The more industrious, respectable members of the Commune, backed by the whole female population, were strongly opposed to the project, knowing full well that a *kabák* would certainly lead to the ruin of more than one household; but the enterprising trader had strong arguments wherewith to seduce a large number of the members, and succeeded in obtaining a decision in his favour.

The Assembly discusses all matters affecting the Communal welfare, and, as these matters have never been legally defined, its recognised competence is very wide. It fixes the time for making the hay, and the day for commencing the ploughing of the fallow field; it decrees what measures shall be employed against those who do not punctually pay their taxes; it decides whether a new member shall be admitted into the Commune, and whether an old member shall be allowed to change his domicile; it gives or withholds permission to erect new buildings on the Communal land; it prepares and signs all contracts which the Commune makes with one of its own members or with a stranger; it interferes whenever it thinks necessary in the domestic affairs of its members; it elects the Elder—as well as the Communal tax-collector and watchman, where such offices exist—and the Communal herd-boy; above all, it divides and allots the Communal land among the members as it thinks fit.

Of all these various proceedings the English reader may naturally assume that the elections are the most noisy and exciting. In reality this is a mistake. The elections produce little excitement, for the simple reason that, as a rule, no one desires to be elected. Once, it is said, a peasant who had been guilty of some misdemeanour was informed by an Arbiter of the Peace—a species of official of which I shall have occasion to speak in the sequel—that he would be no longer capable of filling any Communal office; and instead of regretting this diminution of his civil rights, he bowed very low, and respectfully expressed his thanks for the new privilege which he had acquired. This anecdote may not be true, but it illustrates the undoubted fact that the Russian peasant regards office as a burden rather than as an honour. There is no civic ambition in those little rural Commonwealths,

whilst the privilege of wearing a bronze medal, which commands no respect, and the reception of a few roubles as salary, afford no adequate compensation for the trouble, annoyance, and responsibility which a Village Elder has to bear. The elections are therefore generally very tame and uninteresting. The following description may serve as an illustration.

It is a Sunday afternoon. The peasants, male and female, have turned out in Sunday attire, and the bright costumes of the women help the sunshine to put a little rich colour into the scene, which is at ordinary times monotonously grey. Slowly the crowd collects on the open space at the side of the church. All classes of the population are represented. On the extreme outskirts are a band of fair-haired, merry children—some of them standing or lying on the grass and gazing attentively at the proceedings, and others running about and amusing themselves. Close to these stand a group of young girls, convulsed with half-suppressed laughter. The cause of their merriment is a youth of some seventeen summers, evidently the wag of the village, who stands beside them with an accordion in his hand, and relates to them in a half-whisper how he is about to be elected Elder, and what mad pranks he will play in that capacity. When one of the girls happens to laugh outright, the matrons who are standing near turn round and scowl; and one of them, stepping forward, orders the offender, in a tone of authority, to go home at once if she cannot behave herself. Crestfallen, the culprit retires, and the youth who is the cause of the merriment makes the incident the subject of a new joke. Meanwhile the deliberations have begun. The majority of the members are chatting together, or looking at a little group composed of three peasants and a woman, who are standing a little apart from the others. Here

alone the matter in hand is being really discussed. The woman is explaining, with tears in her eyes, and with a vast amount of useless repetition, that her "old man," who is Elder for the time being, is very ill, and cannot fulfil his duties.

"But he has not yet served a year, and he'll get better," remarks one peasant, evidently the youngest of the little group.

"Who knows?" replies the woman, sobbing. "It is the will of God, but I don't believe that he'll ever put his foot to the ground again. The Feldsher has been four times to see him, and the doctor himself came once, and said that he must be brought to the hospital."

"And why has he not been taken there?"

"How could he be taken? Who is to carry him? Do you think he's a baby? The hospital is forty versts off. If you put him in a cart he would die before he had gone a verst. And then, who knows what they do with people in the hospital?" This last question contained probably the true reason why the doctor's orders had been disobeyed.

"Very well; that's enough; hold your tongue," says the greybeard of the little group to the woman; and then, turning to the other peasants, remarks, "There is nothing to be done. The Stanovoi (officer of rural police) will be here one of these days, and will make a row again if we don't elect a new Elder. Whom shall we choose?"

As soon as this question is asked, several peasants look down to the ground, or try in some other way to avoid attracting attention, lest their names should be suggested. When the silence has continued a minute or two, the greybeard says, "There is Alexei Ivánof; he has not served yet!"

"Yes, yes, Alexei Ivánof!" shout half-a-dozen

voices, belonging probably to peasants who fear they may be elected.

Alexei protests in the strongest terms. He cannot say that he is ill, because his big ruddy face would give him the lie direct, but he finds half-a-dozen other reasons why he should not be chosen, and accordingly requests to be excused. But his protestations are not listened to, and the proceedings terminate. A new Village Elder has been duly elected.

Far more important than the elections is the re-distribution of the Communal land. It can matter but little to the Head of a Household how the elections go, provided he himself is not chosen. He can accept with perfect equanimity Alexei, or Ivan, or Nikolaï, because the office-bearers have very little influence in Communal affairs. But he cannot remain a passive, indifferent spectator when the division and allotment of the land come to be discussed, for the material welfare of every household depends to a great extent on the amount of land and of burdens which it receives.

In the southern provinces, where the soil is fertile, and the taxes do not exceed the normal rent, the process of division and allotment is comparatively simple. Here each peasant desires to get as much land as possible, and consequently each household demands all the land to which it is entitled—that is to say, a number of shares equal to the number of its members inscribed in the last revision list. The Assembly has therefore no difficult questions to decide. The Communal revision list determines the number of shares into which the land must be divided, and the number of shares to be allotted to each family. The only difficulty likely to arise is as to which particular shares a particular family shall receive, and this difficulty is commonly obviated by the custom of

drawing lots. There may be, it is true, some difference of opinion as to when a redistribution should be made, but this question is easily decided by a vote of the Assembly.

Very different is the process of division and allotment in many Communes of the northern provinces. Here the soil is often very unfertile and the taxes exceed the normal rent, and consequently it may happen that the peasants strive to have as little land as possible. In these cases such scenes as the following may occur.

Ivan is being asked how many shares of the Communal land he will take, and replies in a slow, contemplative way, "I have two sons, and there is myself, so I'll take three shares, or somewhat less if it is your pleasure."

"Less!" exclaims a middle-aged peasant, who is not the Village Elder, but merely an influential member, and takes the leading part in the proceedings. "You talk nonsense. Your two sons are already old enough to help you, and soon they may get married, and so bring you two new female labourers."

"My eldest son," explains Ivan, "always works in Moscow, and the other often leaves me in summer."

"But they both send or bring home money, and when they get married, the wives will remain with you."

"God knows what will be," replies Ivan, passing over in silence the first part of his opponent's remark. "Who knows if they will marry?"

"You can easily arrange that!"

"That I cannot do. The times are changed now. The young people do as they wish, and when they do get married they all wish to have houses of their own. Three shares will be heavy enough for me!"

"No, no. If they wish to separate from you, they will take some land from you. You must take at least

four. The old wives there who have little children cannot take shares according to the number of souls."

"He is a rich muzhik!" says a voice in the crowd. "Lay on him five souls!" (that is to say, give him five shares of the land and of the burdens).

"Five souls I cannot! By God, I cannot!"

"Very well, you shall have four," says the leading spirit to Ivan; and then, turning to the crowd, inquires, "Shall it be so?"

"Four! four!" murmurs the crowd; and the question is settled.

Next comes one of the old wives just referred to. Her husband is a permanent invalid, and she has three little boys, only one of whom is old enough for field labour. If the number of souls were taken as the basis of distribution, she would receive four shares; but she would never be able to pay four shares of the Communal burdens. She must therefore receive less than that amount. When asked how many she will take, she replies with downcast eyes, "As the Mir decides, so be it!"

"Then you must take three."

"What do you say, little father?" cries the woman, throwing off suddenly her air of submissive obedience. "Do you hear that, ye orthodox? They want to lay upon me three souls! Was such a thing ever heard of? Since St. Peter's Day my husband has been bedridden—bewitched, it seems, for nothing does him good. He cannot put a foot to the ground—all the same as if he were dead; only he eats bread!"

"You talk nonsense," says a neighbour; "he was in the kabák (gin-shop) last week."

"And you!" retorts the woman, wandering from the subject in hand; "what did *you* do last parish fête? Was it not you who got drunk and beat your wife till she roused the whole village with her shrieking? And no further gone than last Sunday—pfu!"

"Listen!" says the old man sternly, cutting short the torrent of invective. "You must take at least two shares and a half. If you cannot manage it yourself, you can get someone to help you."

"How can that be? Where am I to get the money to pay a labourer?" asks the woman, with much wailing and a flood of tears. "Have pity, ye orthodox, on the poor orphans! God will reward you"; and so on, and so on.

I need not weary the reader with a further description of these scenes, which are always very long and sometimes violent. All present are deeply interested, for the allotment of the land is by far the most important event in Russian peasant life, and the arrangement cannot be made without endless talking and discussion. After the number of shares for each family has been decided, the distribution of the lots gives rise to new difficulties. The families who have plentifully manured their land strive to get back their old lots, and the Commune respects their claims so far as these are consistent with the new arrangement; but often it happens that it is impossible to conciliate private rights and Communal interests, and in such cases the former are sacrificed in a way that would not be tolerated by men of Anglo-Saxon race. This leads, however, to no serious consequences. The peasants are accustomed to work together in this way, to make concessions for the Communal welfare, and to bow unreservedly to the will of the *Mir*. I know of many instances where the peasants have set at defiance the authority of the police, of the provincial governor, and of the central Government itself, but I have never heard of any instance where the will of the Mir was openly opposed by one of its members.

In the preceding pages I have repeatedly spoken about "shares of the Communal land." To prevent

misconception I must explain carefully what this expression means. A share does not mean simply a plot or parcel of land; on the contrary, it always contains at least four, and may contain a large number of distinct plots. We have here a new point of difference between the Russian village and the villages of Western Europe.

Communal land in Russia is of three kinds: the land on which the village is built, the arable land, and the meadow or hay-field, if the village is fortunate enough to possess one. On the first of these each family possesses a house and garden, which are the hereditary property of the family, and are never affected by the periodical redistributions. The other two kinds are both subject to redistribution, but on somewhat different principles.

The whole of the Communal arable land is first of all divided into three fields, to suit the triennial rotation of crops already described, and each field is divided into a number of long narrow strips—corresponding to the number of male members in the Commune—as nearly as possible equal to each other in area and quality. Sometimes it is necessary to divide the field into several portions, according to the quality of the soil, and then to subdivide each of these portions into the requisite number of strips. Thus in all cases every household possesses at least one strip in each field; and in those cases where subdivision is necessary, every household possesses a strip in each of the portions into which the field is subdivided. It often happens, therefore, that the strips are very narrow, and the portions belonging to each family very numerous. Strips six feet wide are by no means rare. In 124 villages of the province of Moscow, regarding which I have special information, they varied in width from three to 45 yards, with an average of 11 yards. Of

these narrow strips a household may possess as many as thirty in a single field! The complicated process of division and subdivision is accomplished by the peasants themselves, with the aid of simple measuring-rods, and the accuracy of the result is truly marvellous.

The meadow, which is reserved for the production of hay, is divided into the same number of shares as the arable land. There, however, the division and distribution take place, not at irregular intervals, but annually. Every year, on a day fixed by the Assembly, the villagers proceed in a body to this part of their property, and divide it into the requisite number of portions. Lots are then cast, and each family at once mows the portion allotted to it. In some Communes the meadow is mown by all the peasants in common, and the hay afterwards distributed by lot among the families; but this system is by no means so frequently used.

As the whole of the Communal land thus resembles to some extent a big farm, it is necessary to make certain rules concerning cultivation. A family may sow what it likes in the land allotted to it, but all families must at least conform to the accepted system of rotation. In like manner, a family cannot begin the autumn ploughing before the appointed time, because it would thereby interfere with the rights of the other families, who use the fallow field as pasturage.

It is not a little strange that this primitive system of land tenure should have succeeded in living into the twentieth century, and still more remarkable that the institution of which it forms an essential part should be regarded by many intelligent people as one of the great institutions of the future, and almost as a panacea for social and political evils. The explanation of these facts will form the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE COMMUNE HAS BEEN PRESERVED, AND WHAT IT IS TO EFFECT IN THE FUTURE.

Sweeping Reforms after the Crimean War—Protest against the *laissez faire* Principle—Fear of the Proletariat—English and Russian Methods of Legislation contrasted—Sanguine Expectations—Evil Consequences of the Communal System—The Commune of the Future—Proletariat of the Towns—The Present State of Things merely temporary.

THE reader is probably aware that immediately after the Crimean War Russia was subjected to a series of sweeping reforms, including the Emancipation of the serfs and the creation of a new system of local self-government, and he may naturally wonder how it came to pass that a curious, primitive institution like the rural Commune succeeded in weathering the bureaucratic hurricane. This strange phenomenon I now proceed to explain, partly because the subject is in itself interesting, and partly because I hope thereby to throw some light on the peculiar intellectual condition of the Russian educated classes.

When it became evident, in 1857, that the serfs were about to be emancipated, it was at first pretty generally supposed that the rural Commune would be entirely abolished, or at least radically modified. At that time many Russians were enthusiastic, indiscriminate admirers of English institutions, and believed, in common with the orthodox school of political economists, that England had acquired her commercial and industrial superiority by adopting the principle of individual liberty and unrestricted competition, or, as French writers term it, the "*laissez faire*" principle. This principle is plainly inconsistent with the rural

Commune, which compels the peasantry to possess land, prevents an enterprising peasant from acquiring the land of his less enterprising neighbours, and places very considerable restrictions on the freedom of action of the individual members. Accordingly it was assumed that the rural Commune, being inconsistent with the modern spirit of progress, would find no place in the new *régime* of liberty which was about to be inaugurated.

No sooner had these ideas been announced in the Press than they called forth strenuous protests. In the crowd of protesters were two well-defined groups. On the one hand there were the so-called Slavophils, a small band of patriotic, highly educated Moscovites, who were strongly disposed to admire everything specifically Russian, and who habitually refused to bow the knee to the wisdom of Western Europe. These gentlemen, in a special organ which they had recently founded, pointed out to their countrymen that the Commune was a venerable and peculiarly Russian institution, which had mitigated in the past the baneful influence of serfage, and would certainly in the future confer inestimable benefits on the emancipated peasantry. The other group was animated by a very different spirit. They had no sympathy with national peculiarities, and no reverence for hoary antiquity. That the Commune was specifically Russian or Slavonic, and a remnant of primitive times, was in their eyes anything but a recommendation in its favour. Cosmopolitan in their tendencies, and absolutely free from all archæological sentimentality, they regarded the institution from the purely utilitarian point of view. They agreed, however, with the Slavophils in thinking that its preservation would have a beneficial influence on the material and moral welfare of the peasantry.

For the sake of convenience it is necessary to designate this latter group by some definite name, but I confess I have some difficulty in making a choice. I do not wish to call these gentlemen Socialists, because many people habitually and involuntarily attach a stigma to the word, and believe that all to whom the term is applied must be first-cousins to the *pétroleuses*. To avoid misconceptions of this kind, it will be well to designate them simply by the organ which most ably represented their views, and to call them the adherents of *The Contemporary*.

The Slavophils and the adherents of *The Contemporary*, though differing widely from each other in many respects, had the same immediate object in view, and accordingly worked together. With great ingenuity they contended that the Communal system of land tenure had much greater advantages, and was attended with much fewer inconveniences than people generally supposed. But they did not confine themselves to these immediate practical advantages, which had very little interest for the general reader. The writers in *The Contemporary* explained that the importance of the rural Commune lies, not in its actual condition, but in its capabilities of development, and they drew, with prophetic eye, pictures of the happy rural Commune of the future. Let me give here, as an illustration, one of these prophetic descriptions:—"Thanks to the spread of primary and technical education the peasants have become well acquainted with the science of agriculture, and are always ready to undertake in common the necessary improvements. They no longer exhaust the soil by exporting the grain, but sell merely certain technical products containing no mineral ingredients. For this purpose the Communes possess distilleries, starch-works, and the like, and the soil thereby retains

its original fertility. The scarcity induced by the natural increase of the population is counteracted by improved methods of cultivation. If the Chinese, who know nothing of natural science, have succeeded by purely empirical methods in perfecting agriculture to such an extent that a whole family can support itself on a few square yards of land, what may not the European do with the help of chemistry, botanical physiology, and the other natural sciences?"

Coming back from the possibilities of the future to the actualities of the present, these ingenious and eloquent writers pointed out that in the rural Commune Russia possessed a sure preventive against the greatest evil of West-European social organisation, the Proletariat. Here the Slavophils could strike in with their favourite refrain about the rotten social condition of Western Europe; and their temporary allies, though they habitually scoffed at the Slavophil jeremiads, had no reason for the moment to contradict them. Very soon the Proletariat became, for the educated classes, a species of bugbear, and the reading public were converted to the doctrine that the Communal institutions should be preserved as a means of excluding the monster from Russia.

This fear of what is vaguely termed the Proletariat is still frequently to be met with in Russia, and I have often taken pains to discover precisely what is meant by the term. I cannot, however, say that my efforts have been completely successful. The monster seems to be as vague and shadowy as the awful forms which Milton placed at the gate of the infernal regions. At one moment he seems to be simply our old enemy Pauperism, but when we approach a little nearer we find that he expands to colossal dimensions, so as to include all who do not possess inalienable landed property. In short, he turns out to be, on

examination, as vague and undefinable as a good bugbear ought to be; and this vagueness contributed probably not a little to his success.

The influence which the idea of the Proletariat exercised on the public mind and on the legislation at the time of the Emancipation is a very notable fact, and well worthy of attention, because it helps to illustrate a point of difference between Russians and Englishmen.

Englishmen are, as a rule, too much occupied with the multifarious concerns of the present to look much ahead into the distant future. We profess, indeed, to regard with horror the maxim, *Après nous le déluge!* and we should probably annihilate with our virtuous indignation anyone who should boldly profess the principle. And yet we often act almost as if we were really partisans of that heartless creed. When called upon to consider the interests of future generations, we declare that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and stigmatise as visionaries and dreamers all who seek to withdraw our attention from the present. A modern Cassandra who confidently predicts the near exhaustion of our coal-fields, or graphically describes a crushing national disaster that must some day overtake us, may attract some public attention; but when we learn that the misfortune is not to take place in our time, we placidly remark that future generations must take care of themselves, and that we cannot reasonably be expected to bear their burdens. When we are obliged to legislate, we proceed in a cautious, tentative way, and are quite satisfied with any homely, simple remedies that common-sense and experience may suggest, without taking the trouble to inquire whether the remedy adopted is in accordance with scientific theories. In short, there is a certain truth in those "famous prophetick pictures" spoken of

by Stillingfleet, which "represent the fate of England by a mole, a creature blind and busy, continually working under ground."

In Russia we find the opposite extreme. There reformers have been trained, not in the arena of practical politics, but in the school of political speculation. As soon, therefore, as they begin to examine any simple matter with a view to legislation, it at once becomes a "question," and flies up into the region of political and social science. Whilst we have been groping along an unexplored path, the Russians have—at least in recent times—been constantly mapping out, with the help of foreign experience, the country that lay before them, and advancing with gigantic strides according to the newest political theories. Men trained in this way cannot rest satisfied with homely remedies which merely alleviate the evils of the moment. They wish to "tear up evil by the roots," and to legislate for future generations as well as for themselves.

This tendency was peculiarly strong at the time of the Emancipation. The educated classes were profoundly convinced that the system of Nicholas I. had been a mistake, and that a new and brighter era was about to dawn upon the country. Everything had to be reformed. The whole social and political edifice had to be reconstructed on entirely new principles.

Let us imagine the position of a man who, having no practical acquaintance with building, suddenly finds himself called upon to construct a large house, containing all the newest appliances for convenience and comfort. What will his first step be? Probably he will proceed at once to study the latest authorities on architecture and construction, and when he has mastered the general principles he will come down

gradually to the details. This is precisely what the Russians did when they found themselves called upon to reconstruct the political and social edifice. They eagerly consulted the most recent English, French, and German writers on social and political science, and here it was that they made the acquaintance of the Proletariat.

People who read books of travel without ever leaving their own country are very apt to acquire exaggerated notions regarding the hardships and dangers of uncivilised life. They read about savage tribes, daring robbers, ferocious wild beasts, poisonous snakes, deadly fevers, and the like; and they cannot but wonder how a human being can exist for a week among such dangers. But if they happen thereafter to visit the countries described, they discover to their surprise that, though the descriptions may not have been exaggerated, life under such conditions is much easier than they supposed. Now the Russians who read about the Proletariat were very much like the people who remain at home and devour books of travel. They gained exaggerated notions, and learned to fear the Proletariat much more than we do, who habitually live in the midst of it. Of course it is quite possible that their view of the subject is truer than ours, and that we may some day, like the people who live tranquilly on the slopes of a volcano, be rudely awakened from our fancied security. But this is an entirely different question. I am at present not endeavouring to justify our habitual callousness with regard to social dangers, but simply seeking to explain why the Russians, who have little or no practical acquaintance with pauperism, should have taken such elaborate precautions against it.

But how can the preservation of the Communal institutions lead to this "consummation devoutly to

be wished," and how far are the precautions likely to be successful?

Those who have studied the mysteries of social science have generally come to the conclusion that the Proletariat has been formed chiefly by the expropriation of the peasantry or small landholders, and that its formation might be prevented, or at least retarded, by any system of legislation which would secure the possession of land for the peasants and prevent them from being uprooted from the soil. Now it must be admitted that the Russian Communal system is admirably adapted for this purpose. About one-half of the arable land has been reserved for the peasantry, and cannot be encroached on by the great landowners or the capitalists, and every adult peasant, roughly speaking, has a right to a share of this land. When I have said that the peasantry compose about five-sixths of the population, and that it is extremely difficult for a peasant to sever his connection with the rural Commune, it will be at once evident that, if the theories of social philosophers are correct, and if the sanguine expectations entertained in many quarters regarding the permanence of the present Communal institutions are destined to be realised, there is little or no danger of a numerous Proletariat being formed, and the Russians are justified in maintaining, as they often do, that they have successfully solved one of the most important and most difficult of social problems.

But is there any reasonable chance of these sanguine expectations being realised?

This is, doubtless, a most complicated and difficult question, but it cannot be shirked. However sceptical we may be with regard to social panaceas of all sorts, we cannot dismiss with a few hackneyed phrases a gigantic experiment in social science involving the material and moral welfare of many millions of human

beings. On the other hand, I do not wish to exhaust the reader's patience by a long series of multifarious details and conflicting arguments. What I propose to do, therefore, is to state in a few words the conclusions at which I have arrived, after a careful study of the question in all its bearings, and to indicate in a general way how I have arrived at these conclusions.

If Russia were content to remain a purely agricultural country of the Sleepy Hollow type, and if her Government were to devote all its energies to maintaining economic and social stagnation, the rural Commune might perhaps prevent the formation of a large Proletariat in the future, as it has tended to prevent it for centuries in the past. The periodical redistributions of the Communal land would secure to every family a portion of the soil, and when the population became too dense, the evils arising from inordinate subdivision of the land might be obviated by a carefully regulated system of emigration to the outlying, thinly populated provinces. All this sounds very well in theory, but experience is proving that it cannot be carried out in practice. In Russia, as in Western Europe, the struggle for life, even among the conservative agricultural classes, is becoming yearly more and more intense, and is producing both the desire and the necessity for greater freedom of individual character and effort, so that each man may make his way in the world according to the amount of his intelligence, energy, spirit of enterprise, and tenacity of purpose. Whatever institutions tend to fetter the individual and maintain a dead level of mediocrity have little chance of subsisting for any great length of time, and it must be admitted that among such institutions, the rural Commune in its present form occupies a prominent place. All its members must possess, in principle if not always in

practice, an equal share of the soil and must practise the same methods of agriculture, and when a certain inequality has been created by individual effort it is in great measure wiped out by a redistribution of the Communal land.

Now, I am well aware that in practice the injustice and inconveniences of the system, being always tempered and corrected by ingenious compromises suggested by long experience, are not nearly so great as the mere theorist might naturally suppose; but they are, I believe, quite great enough to prevent the permanent maintenance of the institution, and already there are ominous indications of the coming change, as I shall explain more fully when I come to deal with the consequences of serf emancipation. On the other hand there is no danger of a sudden general abolition of the old system. Though the law now permits the transition from Communal to personal hereditary tenure, even the progressive, enterprising peasants are slow to avail themselves of the permission; and the reason I once heard given for this conservative tendency is worth recording. A well-to-do peasant who had been in the habit of manuring his land better than his neighbours, and who was consequently a loser by the existing system, said to me: "Of course I want to keep the allotment I have got, but if the land is never again to be divided my grandchildren may be beggars. We must not sin against those who are to come after us." This unexpected reply gave me food for reflection. Surely these muzhiks who are so often accused of being brutally indifferent to moral obligations must have peculiar deep-rooted moral conceptions of their own which exercise a great influence on their daily life. A man who hesitates to sin against his grandchildren still unborn, though his

conceptions of the *meum* and the *tuum* in the present may be occasionally a little confused, must possess somewhere deep down in his nature a secret fund of moral feeling of a very respectable kind.

Even among the educated classes in Russia the way of looking at these matters is very different from ours. We should naturally feel inclined to applaud, encourage, and assist the peasants who show energy and initiative, and who try to rise above their fellows. To the Russian this seems at once inexpedient and immoral. The success of the few, he explains, is always obtained at the expense of the many, and generally by means which the severe moralist cannot approve of. The rich peasants, for example, have gained their fortune and influence by demoralising and exploiting their weaker brethren, by committing all manner of illegalities, and by bribing the local authorities. Hence they are styled *Miroyédy* (Commune-devourers) or *Kulaki* (fists), or something equally uncomplimentary. Once this view is adopted, it follows logically that the Communal institutions, in so far as they form a barrier to the activity of such persons, ought to be carefully preserved. This idea underlies nearly all the arguments in favour of the Commune, and explains why they are so popular. Russians of all classes have, in fact, a leaning towards socialistic notions, and very little sympathy with our belief in individual initiative and unrestricted competition.

Even if it be admitted that the Commune may effectually prevent the formation of an agricultural Proletariat, the question is thereby only half answered. Russia aspires to become a great industrial and commercial country, and accordingly her town population is rapidly augmenting. We have still to consider, then, how the Commune affects the Proletariat of the

towns. In Western Europe the great centres of industry have uprooted from the soil and collected in the towns a great part of the rural population. Those who yielded to this attractive influence severed all connection with their native villages, became unfit for field labour, and were transformed into artisans or factory workers. In Russia this transformation could not easily take place. The peasant might work during the greater part of his life in the towns, but he did not thereby sever his connection with his native village. He remained, whether he desired it or not, a member of the Commune, possessing a share of the Communal land, and liable for a share of the Communal burdens. During his residence in the town, his wife and family remained at home, and thither he himself sooner or later returned. In this way a class of hybrids—half peasants, half artisans—has been created, and the formation of a town Proletariat has been greatly retarded.

The existence of this hybrid class is commonly cited as a beneficent result of the Communal institutions. The artisans and factory labourers, it is said, have thus always a home to which they can retire when thrown out of work or overtaken by old age, and their children are brought up in the country, instead of being reared among the debilitating influences of overcrowded cities. Every common labourer has, in short, by this ingenious contrivance, some small capital and a country residence.

In the present transitional state of Russian society, this peculiar arrangement is at once natural and convenient, but amidst its advantages it has many serious defects. The unnatural separation of the artisan from his wife and family leads to very undesirable results, well known to all who are familiar with the details of peasant life in the northern provinces. And whatever

its advantages and defects may be, it cannot be permanently retained. At the present time the native industry is still in its infancy. Protected by the tariff from foreign competition, and too few in number to produce a strong competition among themselves, the existing factories can give to their owners a large revenue without any strenuous exertion. Manufacturers can therefore allow themselves many little liberties, which would be quite inadmissible if the price of manufactured goods were lowered by brisk competition. Ask a Lancashire manufacturer if he could allow a large portion of his workers to go yearly to Cornwall or Caithness to mow a field of hay or reap a few acres of wheat or oats! And if Russia is to make great industrial progress, the manufacturers of Moscow, Lodz, Ivánovo, and Shui will some day be as hard pressed as are those of Bradford and Manchester. The invariable tendency of modern industry, and the secret of its progress, is the ever-increasing division of labour; and how can this principle be applied if the artisans insist on remaining agriculturists?

The interests of agriculture, too, are opposed to the old system. Agriculture cannot be expected to make progress, or even to be tolerably productive, if it is left in great measure to women and children. At present it is not desirable that the link which binds the factory worker or artisan with the village should be at once severed, for in the neighbourhood of the large factories there is often no proper accommodation for the families of the workers, and agriculture, as at present practised, can be carried on successfully, though the Head of the Household happens to be absent. But the system must be regarded as simply temporary, and the disruption of large families—a phenomenon of which I have already spoken—renders its application more and more difficult.

CHAPTER X.

FINNISH AND TARTAR VILLAGES.

A Finnish Tribe—Finnish Villages—Various Stages of Russification—Finnish Women—Finnish Religions—Method of "laying" Ghosts—Curious Mixture of Christianity and Paganism—Conversion of the Finns—A Tartar Village—A Russian Peasant's Conception of Mahometanism—A Mahometan's View of Christianity—Propaganda—The Russian Colonist—Migrations of Peoples during the Dark Ages.

WHEN talking one day with a landed proprietor who lived near Ivánofka, I accidentally discovered that in a district at some distance to the north-east there were certain villages the inhabitants of which did not understand Russian, and habitually used a peculiar language of their own. With an illogical hastiness worthy of a genuine ethnologist, I at once assumed that these must be the remnants of some aboriginal race.

"Des aborigènes!" I exclaimed, unable to recall the Russian equivalent for the term, and knowing that my friend understood French. "Doubtless the remains of some ancient race who formerly held the country, and are now rapidly disappearing. Have you any Aborigines Protection Society in this part of the world?"

My friend had evidently great difficulty in imagining what an Aborigines Protection Society could be, and promptly assured me that there was nothing of the kind in Russia. On being told that such a society might render valuable services by protecting the weaker against the stronger race, and collecting important materials for the new science of Social Embryology, he looked thoroughly mystified.

As to the new science, he had never heard of it, and as to protection, he thought that the inhabitants of the villages in question were quite capable of protecting themselves. "I could invent," he added, with a malicious smile, "a society for the protection of *all* peasants, but I am quite sure that the authorities would not allow me to carry out my idea."

My ethnological curiosity was thoroughly aroused, and I endeavoured to awaken a similar feeling in my friend by hinting that we had at hand a promising field for discoveries which might immortalise the fortunate explorers; but my efforts were in vain. The old gentleman was a portly, indolent man, of phlegmatic temperament, who thought more of comfort than of immortality in the terrestrial sense of the term. To my proposal that we should start at once on an exploring expedition, he replied calmly that the distance was considerable, that the roads were muddy, and that there was nothing to be learned. The villages in question were very like other villages, and their inhabitants lived, to all intents and purposes, in the same way as their Russian neighbours. If they had any secret peculiarities they would certainly not divulge them to a stranger, for they were notoriously silent, gloomy, morose, and uncommunicative. Everything that was known about them, my friend assured me, might be communicated in a few words. They belonged to a Finnish tribe called Korelli, and had been transported to their present settlements in comparatively recent times. In answer to my questions as to how, when, and by whom they had been transported thither, my informant replied that it had been the work of Ivan the Terrible.

Though I knew at that time little of Russian history, I suspected that the last assertion was invented on the spur of the moment in order to

satisfy my troublesome curiosity, and accordingly I determined not to accept it without verification. The result showed how careful the traveller should be in accepting the testimony of "intelligent, well-informed natives." On further investigation I discovered, not only that the story about Ivan the Terrible was a pure invention—whether of my friend or of the popular imagination, which always uses heroic names as pegs on which to hang traditions, I know not—but also that my first theory was correct. These Finnish peasants turned out to be a remnant of the aborigines, or at least of the oldest known inhabitants of the district. Men of the same race, but bearing different tribal names, such as Finns, Korelli, Tcheremiss, Tchuvash, Mordvá, Votyaks, Permyaks, Zyryanye, Voguls, are to be found in considerable numbers all over the northern provinces, from the Gulf of Bothnia to Western Siberia, as well as in the provinces bordering the Middle Volga as far south as Penza, Simbirsk, and Tamboff.* The Russian peasants, who now compose the great mass of the population, are the intruders.

I had long taken a deep interest in what learned Germans call the *Völkerwanderung*—that is to say, the migrations of peoples during the gradual dissolution of the Roman Empire, and it had often occurred to me that the most approved authorities, who had expended an infinite amount of learning on the subject, had not always taken the trouble to investigate the nature of the process. It is not enough to know that a race or tribe extended its dominions or changed its geographical position. We ought at the same time to inquire whether it expelled, exterminated, or

* The semi-official "Statesman's Handbook for Russia," published in 1896, enumerates fourteen different tribes with an aggregate of about 4,650,000 souls, but these numbers must not be regarded as having any pretensions to accuracy. The best authorities differ widely in their estimates.

absorbed the former inhabitants, and how the expulsion, extermination, or absorption was effected. Now, of these three processes, absorption may have been more frequent than is commonly supposed, and it seemed to me that in Northern Russia this process might be conveniently studied. A thousand years ago the whole of Northern Russia was peopled by Finnish pagan tribes, and at the present day the greater part of it is occupied by peasants who speak the language of Moscow, profess the Orthodox faith, present in their physiognomy no striking peculiarities, and appear to the superficial observer pure Russians. And we have no reason to suppose that the former inhabitants were expelled or exterminated, or that they gradually died out from contact with the civilisation and vices of a higher race. History records no wholesale Finnish migrations like that of the Kalmyks, and no war of extermination; and statistics prove that among the remnants of those primitive races the population increases as rapidly as among the Russian peasantry.* From these facts I concluded that the Finnish aborigines had been simply absorbed, or, rather, were being absorbed, by the Slavonic intruders.

This conclusion has since been confirmed by observation. During my wanderings in these northern provinces I have found villages in every stage of Russification. In one, everything seemed thoroughly Finnish: the inhabitants had a reddish olive skin, very high cheek-bones, obliquely set eyes, and a peculiar costume; none of the women, and very few of the men, could understand Russian, and any Russian who visited the place was regarded as a foreigner. In a

* This latter statement is made on the authority of Popoff ("Zyryanye i zyryanski krai," Moscow, 1874) and Tcheremshanski ("Opisanié Orenburgskoi Gubernii," Ufa, 1859).

second, there were already some Russian inhabitants; the others had lost something of their pure Finnish type, many of the men had discarded the old costume and spoke Russian fluently, and a Russian visitor was no longer shunned. In a third, the Finnish type was still further weakened: all the men spoke Russian, and nearly all the women understood it; the old male costume had entirely disappeared, and the old female costume was rapidly following it; while intermarriage with the Russian population was no longer rare. In a fourth, intermarriage had almost completely done its work, and the old Finnish element could be detected merely in certain peculiarities of physiognomy and pronunciation.*

The process of Russification may be likewise observed in the manner of building the houses and in the methods of farming, which show plainly that the Finnish races did not obtain rudimentary civilisation from the Slavs. Whence, then, was it derived? Was it obtained from some other race, or is it indigenous? These are questions which I have no means of answering.

A Positivist poet—or if that be a contradiction in terms, let us say a Positivist who wrote verses—once composed an appeal to the fair sex, beginning with the words—

"Pourquoi, O femmes, restez-vous en arrière?"

The question might have been addressed to the women in these Finnish villages. Like their sisters in France, they are much more conservative than the men, and oppose much more stubbornly the Russian influence. On the other hand, like women in general, when they do begin to change, they change more rapidly. This

* One of the most common peculiarities of pronunciation is the substitution of the sound of *ts* for that of *toh*, which I found almost universal over a large area.

is seen especially in the matter of costume. The men adopt the Russian costume very gradually; the women adopt it at once. As soon as a single woman gets a gaudy Russian dress, every other woman in the village feels envious and impatient till she has done likewise. I remember once visiting a Mordvá village when this critical point had been reached, and a very characteristic incident occurred. In the preceding villages through which I had passed I had tried in vain to buy a female costume, and I again made the attempt. This time the result was very different. A few minutes after I had expressed my wish to purchase a costume, the house in which I was sitting was besieged by a great crowd of women, holding in their hands articles of wearing apparel. In order to make a selection I went out into the crowd, but the desire to find a purchaser was so general and so ardent that I was regularly mobbed. The women, shouting "Kupí! kupí!" ("Buy! buy!"), and struggling with each other to get near me, were so importunate that I had at last to take refuge in the house, to prevent my own costume from being torn to shreds. But even there I was not safe, for the women followed at my heels, and a considerable amount of good-natured violence had to be employed to expel the intruders.

It is especially interesting to observe the transformation of nationality in the sphere of religious conceptions. The Finns remained pagans long after the Russians had become Christians, but at the present time the whole population, from the eastern boundary of Finland Proper to the Ural Mountains, are officially described as members of the Greek Orthodox Church. The manner in which this change of religion was effected is well worthy of attention.

The old religion of the Finnish tribes, if we may

judge from the fragments which still remain, had, like the people themselves, a thoroughly practical, prosaic character. Their theology consisted not of abstract dogmas, but merely of simple prescriptions for the ensuring of material welfare. Even at the present day, in the districts not completely Russified, their prayers are plain, unadorned requests for a good harvest, plenty of cattle, and the like, and are expressed in a tone of childlike familiarity that sounds strange in our ears. They make no attempt to veil their desires with mystic solemnity, but ask, in simple, straightforward fashion, that God should make the barley ripen and the cow calve successfully, that He should prevent their horses from being stolen, and that He should help them to gain money to pay their taxes.

Their religious ceremonies have, so far as I have been able to discover, no hidden mystical signification, and are for the most part rather magical rites for averting the influence of malicious spirits, or freeing themselves from the unwelcome visits of their departed relatives. For this latter purpose many, even of those who are officially Christians, proceed at stated seasons to the graveyards, and place an abundant supply of cooked food on the graves of their relations who have recently died, requesting the departed to accept this meal, and not to return to their old homes, where their presence is no longer desired. Though more of the food is eaten at night by the village dogs than by the famished spirits, the custom is believed to have a powerful influence in preventing the dead from wandering about at night and frightening the living. If it be true, as I am inclined to believe, that tombstones were originally used for keeping the dead in their graves, then it must be admitted that in the matter of "laying"

ghosts the Finns have shown themselves much more humane than other races. It may, however, be suggested that in the original home of the Finns—"*le berceau de la race*," as French ethnologists say—stones could not easily be procured, and that the custom of feeding the dead was adopted as a *pis aller*. The decision of the question must be left to those who know where the original home of the Finns was.

As the Russian peasantry, knowing little or nothing of theology, and placing implicit confidence in rites and ceremonies, did not differ very widely from the pagan Finns in the matter of religious conceptions, the friendly contact of the two races naturally led to a curious blending of the two religions. The Russians adopted many customs from the Finns, and the Finns adopted still more from the Russians. When Yumala and the other Finnish deities did not do as they were desired, their worshippers naturally applied for protection or assistance to the Madonna and the "Russian God." If their own traditional magic rites did not suffice to ward off evil influences, they naturally tried the effect of crossing themselves, as the Russians do in moments of danger. All this may seem strange to us who have been taught from our earliest years that religion is something quite different from spells, charms, and incantations, and that of all the various religions in the world one alone is true, all the others being false. But we must remember that the Finns have had a very different education. They do not distinguish religion from magic rites, and they have never been taught that other religions are less true than their own. For them the best religion is the one which contains the most potent spells, and they see no reason why less powerful religions should not be

blended therewith. Their deities are not jealous gods, and do not insist on having a monopoly of devotion; and in any case they cannot do much injury to those who have placed themselves under the protection of a more powerful divinity.

This simple-minded eclecticism often produces a singular mixture of Christianity and paganism. Thus, for instance, at the harvest festivals, Tchuvash peasants have been known to pray first to their own deities, and then to St. Nicholas, the miracle-worker, who is the favourite saint of the Russian peasantry. Such dual worship is sometimes even recommended by the Yomzi—a class of men who correspond to the medicine-men among the Red Indians—and the prayers are on these occasions couched in the most familiar terms. Here is a specimen given by a Russian who has specially studied the language and customs of this interesting people: * "Look here, O Nicholas-god! Perhaps my neighbour, little Michael, has been slandering me to you, or perhaps he will do so. If he does, don't believe him. I have done him no ill, and wish him none. He is a worthless boaster and a babbler. He does not really honour you, and merely plays the hypocrite. But I honour you from my heart; and, behold, I place a taper before you!" Sometimes incidents occur which display a still more curious blending of the two religions. Thus a Tcheremiss, on one occasion, in consequence of a serious illness, sacrificed a young foal to our Lady of Kazan!

Though the Finnish beliefs affected to some extent the Russian peasantry, the Russian faith ultimately prevailed. This can be explained without taking into consideration the inherent superiority of Christianity over all forms of paganism. The Finns

* Mr. Zolotnitski, "Tchuvasko-russki slovár," p. 167.

had no organised priesthood, and consequently never offered a systematic opposition to the new faith; the Russians, on the contrary, had a regular hierarchy in close alliance with the civil administration. In the principal villages Christian churches were built, and some of the police officers vied with the ecclesiastical officials in the work of making converts. At the same time there were other influences tending in the same direction. If a Russian practised Finnish superstitions he exposed himself to disagreeable consequences of a temporal kind; if, on the contrary, a Finn adopted the Christian religion, the temporal consequences that could result were all advantageous to him.

Many of the Finns gradually became Christians almost unconsciously. The ecclesiastical authorities were extremely moderate in their demands. They insisted on no religious knowledge, and merely demanded that the converts should be baptised. The converts, failing to understand the spiritual significance of the ceremony, commonly offered no resistance, so long as the immersion was performed in summer. So little repugnance, indeed, did they feel, that on some occasions, when a small reward was given to those who consented, some of the new converts wished the ceremony to be repeated several times. The chief objection to receiving the Christian faith lay in the long and severe fasts imposed by the Greek Orthodox Church; but this difficulty was overcome by assuming that they need not be strictly observed. At first, in some districts, it was popularly believed that the Icons informed the Russian priests against those who did not fast as the Church prescribed; but experience gradually exploded this theory. Some of the more prudent converts, however, to prevent all possible tale-telling, took the

precaution of turning the face of the Icon to the wall when prohibited meats were about to be eaten!

This gradual conversion of the Finnish tribes, effected without any intellectual revolution in the minds of the converts, had very important temporal consequences. Community of faith led to intermarriage, and intermarriage led rapidly to the blending of the two races.

If we compare a Finnish village in any stage of Russification with a Tartar village, of which the inhabitants are Mahometans, we cannot fail to be struck by the contrast. In the latter, though there may be many Russians, there is no blending of the two races. Between them religion has raised an impassable barrier. There are many villages in the eastern and north-eastern provinces of European Russia which have been for generations half Tartar and half Russian, and the amalgamation of the two nationalities has not yet begun. Near the one end stands the Christian church, and near the other stands the little *metchet*, or Mahometan house of prayer. The whole village forms one Commune, with one Village Assembly and one Village Elder; but, socially, it is composed of two distinct communities, each possessing its peculiar customs and peculiar mode of life. The Tartar may learn Russian, but he does not on that account become Russianised.

It must not, however, be supposed that the two races are imbued with fanatical hatred towards each other. On the contrary, they live in perfect good-fellowship, elect as Village Elder sometimes a Russian and sometimes a Tartar, and discuss the Communal affairs in the Village Assembly without reference to religious matters. I know one village where the good-fellowship went even a step further: the Christians determined to repair their church, and the Mahometans

helped them to transport wood for the purpose! All this tends to show that under a tolerably good Government, which does not favour one race at the expense of the other, Mahometan Tartars and Christian Slavs can live peaceably together.

The absence of fanaticism and of that proselytising zeal which is one of the most prolific sources of religious hatred, is to be explained by the peculiar religious conceptions of these peasants. In their minds religion and nationality are so closely allied as to be almost identical. The Russian is, as it were, by nature a Christian, and the Tartar a Mahometan; and it never occurs to anyone in these villages to disturb the appointed order of nature. On this subject I had once an interesting conversation with a Russian peasant who had been for some time living among Tartars. In reply to my question as to what kind of people the Tartars were, he replied laconically, "Nitchevó"—that is to say, "nothing in particular"; and on being pressed for a more definite expression of opinion, he admitted that they were very good people indeed.

"And what kind of faith have they?" I continued.

"A good enough faith," was the prompt reply.

"Is it better than the faith of the Molokánye?" The Molokánye are Russian sectarians—closely resembling Scotch Presbyterians—of whom I shall have more to say in the sequel.

"Of course it is better than the Molokán faith."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, endeavouring to conceal my astonishment at this strange judgment. "Are the Molokánye, then, very bad people?"

"Not at all. The Molokánye are good and honest."

"Why, then, do you think their faith is so much worse than that of the Mahometans?"

"How shall I tell you?" The peasant here

paused as if to collect his thoughts, and then proceeded slowly, "The Tartars, you see, received their faith from God as they received the colour of their skins, but the Molokánye are Russians, who have invented a faith out of their own heads!"

This singular answer scarcely requires a commentary. As it would be absurd to try to make Tartars change the colour of their skins, so it would be absurd to try to make them change their religion. Besides this, such an attempt would be an unjustifiable interference with the designs of Providence, for, in the peasant's opinion, God gave Mahometanism to the Tartars just as he gave the Orthodox faith to the Russians.

The ecclesiastical authorities do not formally adopt this strange theory, but they generally act in accordance with it. There is little official propaganda among the Mahometan subjects of the Tsar, and it is well that it is so, for an energetic propaganda would lead merely to the stirring up of any latent hostility which may exist deep down in the nature of the two races, and it would not make any real converts. The Tartars cannot unconsciously imbibe Christianity as the Finns have done. Their religion is not a rude, simple paganism without theology in the scholastic sense of the term, but a monotheism as exclusive as Christianity itself. Enter into conversation with an intelligent man who has no higher religious belief than a rude sort of paganism, and you may, if you know him well and make a judicious use of your knowledge, easily interest him in the touching story of Christ's life and teaching. And in these unsophisticated natures there is but one step from interest and sympathy to conversion.

Try the same method with a Mussulman, and you will soon find that all your efforts are fruit-

less. He has already a theology and a prophet of his own, and sees no reason why he should exchange them for those which you have to offer. Perhaps he will show you more or less openly that he pities your ignorance, and wonders that you have not been able to *advance* from Christianity to Mahometanism. In his opinion—I am supposing that he is a man of education—Moses and Christ were great prophets in their day, and consequently he is accustomed to respect their memory; but he is profoundly convinced that, however appropriate they were for their own times, they have been entirely superseded by Mahomet, precisely as we believe that Judaism was superseded by Christianity. Proud of his superior knowledge, he regards you as a benighted polytheist, and may perhaps tell you that the Orthodox Christians with whom he comes in contact have three Gods and a host of lesser deities called saints, that they pray to idols called Icons, and that they keep their holy days by getting drunk. In vain you endeavour to explain to him that saints and Icons are not essential parts of Christianity, and that habits of intoxication have no religious significance. On these points he may make concessions to you, but the doctrine of the Trinity remains for him a fatal stumbling-block. "You Christians," he will say, "once had a great prophet called Jisous, who is mentioned with respect in the Koran, but you falsified your sacred writings and took to worshipping him, and now you declare that he is the equal of Allah. Far from us be such blasphemy! There is but one God, and Mahomet is His prophet."

A worthy Christian missionary, who had laboured long and zealously among a Mussulman population, once called me sharply to account for having expressed the opinion that Mahometans are very rarely converted to Christianity. When I brought him down

from the region of vague general statements and insisted on knowing how many cases he had met with in his own personal experience during sixteen years of missionary work, he was constrained to admit that he had known only one; and when I pressed him further as to the disinterested sincerity of the convert in question, his reply was not altogether satisfactory!

The policy of religious non-intervention has not always been practised by the Government. Soon after the conquest of the Khanate of Kazan in the sixteenth century, the Tsars of Muscovy attempted to convert their new subjects from Mahometanism to Christianity. The means employed were partly spiritual and partly administrative, but the police officers seem to have played a more important part than the clergy. In this way a certain number of Tartars were baptised; but the authorities were obliged to admit that the new converts "shamelessly retain many horrid Tartar customs, and neither hold nor know the Christian faith." When spiritual exhortations failed, the Government ordered its officials to "pacify, imprison, put in irons, and thereby *unteach* and frighten from the Tartar faith those who, though baptised, do not obey the admonitions of the Metropolitan." These energetic measures proved as ineffectual as the spiritual exhortations; and Catherine II. adopted a new method, highly characteristic of her system of administration. The new converts—who, be it remembered, were unable to read and write—were ordered by Imperial ukaz to sign a written promise to the effect that "they would completely forsake their infidel errors, and, avoiding all intercourse with unbelievers, would hold firmly and unwaveringly the Christian faith and its dogmas'*—of which latter, we may add, they had not the slightest knowledge. The childlike faith in the

* "Ukaz Kazanskoi dukhovnoi Konsistorii." Anno 1778.

magical efficacy of stamped paper here displayed was not justified. The so-called "baptised Tartars" are at the present time as far from being Christians as they were in the sixteenth century. They cannot openly profess Mahometanism, because men who have been once formally admitted into the National Church cannot leave it without exposing themselves to the severe pains and penalties of the criminal code, but they strongly object to be Christianised.

On this subject I have found a remarkable admission in a semi-official article, published as recently as 1872.* "It is a fact worthy of attention," says the writer, "that a long series of evident apostasies coincides with the beginning of measures to confirm the converts in the Christian faith. There must be, therefore, some collateral cause producing those cases of apostasy precisely at the moment when the contrary might be expected." There is a delightful naïveté in this way of stating the fact. The mysterious cause vaguely indicated is not difficult to find. So long as the Government demanded merely that the supposed converts should be inscribed as Christians in the official registers, there was no official apostasy; but as soon as active measures began to be taken "to confirm the converts," a spirit of hostility and fanaticism appeared among the Mussulman population, and made those who were inscribed as Christians resist the propaganda.

It may safely be said that Christians are impervious to Islam, and genuine Mussulmans impervious to Christianity; but between the two there are certain tribes, or fractions of tribes, which present a promising field for missionary enterprise. In this field the Tartars show much more zeal than the Russians, and

* "Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshtcheniya." June, 1872.

possess certain advantages over their rivals. The tribes of North-eastern Russia learn Tartar much more easily than Russian, and their geographical position and modes of life bring them in contact with Russians much less than with Tartars. The consequence is that whole villages of Tcheremiss and Votiáks, officially inscribed as belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church, have openly declared themselves Mahometans; and some of the more remarkable conversions have been commemorated by popular songs, which are sung by young and old. Against this propaganda the Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities do little or nothing. Though the criminal code contains severe enactments against those who fall away from the Orthodox Church, and still more against those who produce apostasy,* the enactments are rarely put in force. Both clergy and laity in the Russian Church are, as a rule, very tolerant where no political questions are involved. The parish priest pays attention to apostasy only when it diminishes his annual revenues, and this can be easily avoided by the apostates paying a small yearly sum. If this precaution be taken, whole villages may be converted to Islam without the higher ecclesiastical authorities knowing anything of the matter.

Whether the barrier that separates Christians and Mussulmans in Russia, as elsewhere, will ever be broken down by education, I do not know; but I may remark that hitherto the spread of education among the Tartars has tended rather to imbue them with fanaticism. If we remember that theological education always produces intolerance, and that Tartar education is almost exclusively theological, we shall

* A person convicted of converting a Christian to Islam is sentenced, according to the criminal code (§ 184), to the loss of all civil rights, and to imprisonment with hard labour for a term varying from eight to ten years.

not be surprised to find that a Tartar's religious fanaticism is generally in direct proportion to the amount of his intellectual culture. The unlettered Tartar, unspoiled by learning falsely so called, and knowing merely enough of his religion to perform the customary ordinances prescribed by the Prophet, is peaceable, kindly, and hospitable towards all men; but the learned Tartar, who has been taught that the Christian is a *kiafir* (infidel) and a *müshrik* (polytheist), odious in the sight of Allah, and already condemned to eternal punishment, is as intolerant and fanatical as the most bigoted Roman Catholic or Calvinist. Such fanatics are occasionally to be met with in the eastern provinces, but they are few in number, and have little influence on the masses. From my own experience I can testify that during the whole course of my wanderings I have nowhere received more kindness and hospitality than among the uneducated Mussulman Bashkirs. Even here, however, Islam opposes a strong barrier to Russification.

Though no such barrier existed among the pagan Finnish tribes, the work of Russification among them is still, as I have already indicated, far from complete. Not only whole villages, but even many entire districts, are still very little affected by Russian influence. This is to be explained partly by geographical conditions. In regions which have a poor soil, and are intersected by no navigable river, there are few or no Russian settlers, and consequently the Finns have there preserved intact their language and customs; whilst in those districts which present more inducements to colonisation, the Russian population is more numerous, and the Finns less conservative. It must, however, be admitted that geographical conditions do not completely explain the facts. The various tribes, even when placed in the same conditions, are not equally

susceptible to foreign influence. The Mordvá, for instance, are infinitely less conservative than the Tchuvásh. This I have often noticed, and my impression has been confirmed by men who have had more opportunities of observation. For the present we must attribute this to some occult ethnological peculiarity, but future investigations may some day supply a more satisfactory explanation. Already I have obtained some facts which appear to throw light on the subject. The Tchuvásh have certain customs which seem to indicate that they were formerly, if not avowed Mahometans, at least under the influence of Islam, whilst we have no reason to suppose that the Mordvá ever passed through that school.

The absence of religious fanaticism greatly facilitated Russian colonisation in these northern regions, and the essentially peaceful disposition of the Russian peasantry tended in the same direction. The Russian peasant is admirably fitted for the work of peaceful agricultural colonisation. Among uncivilised tribes he is good-natured, long-suffering, conciliatory, capable of bearing extreme hardships, and endowed with a marvellous power of adapting himself to circumstances. The haughty consciousness of personal and national superiority habitually displayed by Englishmen of all ranks when they are brought in contact with races which they look upon as lower in the scale of humanity than themselves, is entirely foreign to his character. He has no desire to rule, and no wish to make the natives hewers of wood and drawers of water. All he desires is a few acres of land, which he and his family can cultivate; and so long as he is allowed to enjoy these, he is not likely to molest his neighbours. Had the colonists of the Finnish country been men of Anglo-Saxon race, they would in all probability have taken possession of the

land and reduced the natives to the condition of agricultural labourers. The Russian colonists have contented themselves with a humbler and less aggressive mode of action; they have settled peaceably among the native population, and are rapidly becoming blended with it. In many districts the so-called Russians have perhaps more Finnish than Slavonic blood in their veins.

But what has all this to do, it may be asked, with the aforementioned *Völkerwanderung*, or migration of peoples, during the Dark Ages? More than may at first sight appear. Some of the so-called migrations were, I suspect, not at all migrations in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather gradual changes, such as those which have taken place, and are still taking place, in Northern Russia. A thousand years ago, what is now known as the province of Yaroslavl was inhabited by Finns, and now it is occupied by men who are commonly regarded as pure Slavs. But it would be an utter mistake to suppose that the Finns of this district migrated to those more distant regions where they are now to be found. In reality they formerly occupied, as I have said, the whole of Northern Russia, and in the province of Yaroslavl they have been transformed by Slav infiltration. In Central Europe the Slavs may be said in a certain sense to have retreated, for in former times they occupied the whole of Northern Germany as far as the Elbe. But what does the word "retreat" mean in this case? It means probably that the Slavs were gradually Teutonised, and then absorbed by the Teutonic race. Some tribes, it is true, swept over a part of Europe in genuine nomadic fashion, and endeavoured perhaps to expel or exterminate the actual possessors of the soil. This kind of migration may likewise be studied in Russia. But I must leave the subject till I come to speak of the southern provinces.

CHAPTER XI.

LORD NOVGOROD THE GREAT.

Departure from Ivánofka and Arrival at Novgorod—The Eastern Half of the Town—The Kremlin—An Old Legend—The Armed Men of Rûs—The Northmen—Popular Liberty in Novgorod—The Prince and the Popular Assembly—Civil Dissensions and Faction-fights—The Commercial Republic conquered by the Muscovite Tsars—Ivan the Terrible—Present Condition of the Town—Provincial Society—Card-playing—Periodicals—"Eternal Stillness."

COUNTRY life in Russia is pleasant enough in summer or in winter, but between summer and winter there is an intermediate period of several weeks, when the rain and mud transform a country-house into something very like a prison. To escape this durance vile I determined in the month of October to leave Ivánofka, and chose as my headquarters for the next few months the town of Novgorod—the old town of that name, not to be confounded with Nizhni Novgorod, *i.e.* Lower Novgorod, on the Volga, where the great annual fair is held.

For this choice there were several reasons. I did not wish to go to St. Petersburg or Moscow, because I foresaw that in either of those cities my studies would certainly be interrupted. In a quiet, sleepy provincial town I should have much more chance of coming in contact with people who could not speak fluently any West-European languages, and much better opportunities for studying native life and local administration. Of the provincial capitals, Novgorod was the nearest, and more interesting than most of its rivals; for it has had a curious history, much older than that of St. Petersburg or even of Moscow, and

some traces of its former greatness are still visible. Though now a town of third-rate importance—a mere shadow of its former self—it still contains about 21,000 inhabitants, and is the administrative centre of the large province in which it is situated.

About eighty miles before reaching St. Petersburg the Moscow railway crosses the Volkhof, a rapid, muddy river which connects Lake Ilmen with Lake Ladoga. At the point of intersection I got on board a small steamer and sailed up stream towards Lake Ilmen for about fifty miles.* The journey was tedious, for the country was flat and monotonous, and the steamer, though it puffed and snorted inordinately, did not make more than nine knots. Towards sunset Novgorod appeared on the horizon. Seen thus at a distance in the soft twilight, it seemed decidedly picturesque. On the east bank lay the greater part of the town, the sky line of which was agreeably broken by the green roofs and pear-shaped cupolas of many churches. On the opposite bank rose the Kremlin. Spanning the river was a long, venerable stone bridge, half hidden by a temporary wooden one, which was doing duty for the older structure while the latter was being repaired. A cynical fellow-passenger assured me that the temporary structure was destined to become permanent because it yielded a comfortable revenue to certain officials, but this sinister prediction has not been verified.

That part of Novgorod which lies on the eastern bank of the river, and in which I took up my abode for several months, contains nothing that is worthy of special attention. As is the case in most Russian towns, the streets are straight, wide, and ill-paved, and all run parallel or at right angles to each other.

* The journey would now be made by rail, but the branch line which runs near the bank of the river had not been constructed at that time.

At the end of the bridge is a spacious market-place, flanked on one side by the Town-house. Near the other side stand the houses of the Governor and of the chief military authority of the district. The only other buildings of note are the numerous churches, which are mostly small, and offer nothing that is likely to interest the student of architecture. Altogether this part of the town is unquestionably commonplace. The learned archæologist may detect in it some traces of the distant past, but the ordinary traveller will find little to arrest his attention.

If now we cross over to the other side of the river, we are at once confronted by something which very few Russian towns possess—a kremlin, or citadel. This is a large and slightly elevated enclosure, surrounded by high brick walls, and in part by the remains of a moat. Before the days of heavy artillery these walls must have presented a formidable barrier to any besieging force, but they have long ceased to have any military significance, and are now nothing more than an historical monument. Passing through the gateway which faces the bridge, we find ourselves in a large open space. To the right stands the cathedral—a small, much-venerated church, which can make no pretensions to architectural beauty—and an irregular group of buildings containing the consistory and the residence of the Archbishop. To the left is a long symmetrical range of buildings containing the Government offices and the law courts. Midway between this and the cathedral, in the centre of the great open space, stands a colossal monument, composed of a massive circular stone pedestal and an enormous globe, on and around which cluster a number of emblematic and historical figures. This curious monument, which has at least the merit of being original in design, was erected in 1862, in com-

memoration of Russia's thousandth birthday, and is supposed to represent the history of Russia in general and of Novgorod in particular during the last thousand years. It was placed here because Novgorod is the oldest of Russian towns, and because somewhere in the surrounding country occurred the incident which is commonly recognised as the foundation of the Russian Empire. The incident in question is thus described in the oldest chronicle:—

"At that time, as the southern Slavonians paid tribute to the Kozars, so the Novgorodian Slavonians suffered from the attacks of the Variags. For some time the Variags extracted tribute from the Novgorodian Slavonians and the neighbouring Finns; then the conquered tribes, by uniting their forces, drove out the foreigners. But among the Slavonians arose strong internal dissensions; the clans rose against each other. Then, for the creation of order and safety, they resolved to call in princes from a foreign land. In the year 862 Slavonic legates went away beyond the sea to the Variag tribe called Rūs, and said, 'Our land is great and fruitful, but there is no order in it; come and reign and rule over us.' Three brothers accepted the invitation, and appeared with their armed followers. The eldest of these, Rurik, settled in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, at Byelo-ózero; and the third, Truvor, in Isborsk. From them our land is called Rūs. After two years the brothers of Rurik died. He alone began to rule over the Novgorod district, and confided to his men the administration of the principal towns."

This simple legend has given rise to a vast amount of learned controversy, and historical investigators have fought valiantly with each other over the important question, Who were those armed men of Rūs? For a long time the commonly received opinion was

that they were Normans from Scandinavia. The Slavophils accepted the legend literally in this sense, and constructed upon it an ingenious theory of Russian history. The nations of the West, they said, were conquered by invaders, who seized the country and created the feudal system for their own benefit; hence the history of Western Europe is a long tale of bloody struggles between conquerors and conquered, and at the present day the old enmity still lives in the political rivalry of the different social classes. The Russo-Slavonians, on the contrary, were not conquered, but voluntarily invited a foreign prince to come and rule over them; hence the whole social and political development of Russia has been essentially peaceful, and the Russian people know nothing of social castes or feudalism. Though this theory afforded some nourishment for patriotic self-satisfaction, it displeased extreme patriots, who did not like the idea that order was first established in their country by men of Teutonic race. These preferred to adopt the theory that Rurik and his companions were Slavonians from the shores of the Baltic.

Though I devoted to the study of this question more time and labour than perhaps the subject deserved, I have no intention of inviting the reader to follow me through the tedious controversy. Suffice it to say that, after careful consideration, and with all due deference to recent historians, I am inclined to adopt the old theory, and to regard the Normans of Scandinavia as in a certain sense the founders of the Russian Empire. We know from other sources that during the ninth century there was a great exodus from Scandinavia. Greedy of booty, and fired with the spirit of adventure, the Northmen, in their light open boats, swept along the coasts of Germany, France, Spain, Greece, and Asia Minor, pillaging the

towns and villages near the sea, and entering into the heart of the country by means of the rivers. At first they were mere marauders, and showed everywhere such ferocity and cruelty that they came to be regarded as something akin to plagues and famines, and the faithful added a new petition to the Litany, "From the wrath and malice of the Normans, O Lord, deliver us!" But towards the middle of the century the movement changed its character. The raids became military invasions, and the invaders sought to conquer the lands which they had formerly plundered, "ut acquirant sibi spoliando regna quibus possent vivere pace perpetua." The chiefs embraced Christianity, married the daughters or sisters of the reigning princes, and obtained the conquered territories as feudal grants. Thus arose Norman principalities in the Low Countries, in France, in Italy, and in Sicily; and the Northmen, rapidly blending with the native population, soon showed as much political talent as they had formerly shown reckless and destructive valour.

It would have been strange indeed if these adventurers, who succeeded in reaching Asia Minor and the coasts of North America, should have overlooked Russia, which lay, as it were, at their very doors. The Volkhof, flowing through Novgorod, formed part of a great water-way, which afforded almost uninterrupted water communication between the Baltic and the Black Sea; and we know that some time afterwards the Scandinavians used this route in their journeys to Constantinople. The change which the Scandinavian movement underwent elsewhere is clearly indicated by the Russian chronicles: first, the Variags came as collectors of tribute, and raised so much popular opposition that they were expelled, and then they came as rulers, and settled in the country.

Whether they really came on invitation may be doubted, but that they adopted the language, religion, and customs of the native population does not militate against the assertion that they were Normans. On the contrary, we have here rather an additional confirmation, for elsewhere the Normans did likewise. In the North of France they adopted almost at once the French language and religion, and the son and successor of the famous Rollo was sometimes reproached with being more French than Norman.*

Though it is difficult to decide how far the legend is literally true, there can be no possible doubt that the event which it more or less accurately describes had an important influence on Russian history. From that time dates the rapid expansion of the Russo-Slavonians—a movement that is still going on at the present day. To the north, the east, and the south, new principalities were formed and governed by men who all claimed to be descendants of Rurik, and down to the end of the sixteenth century no Russian outside of this great family ever attempted to establish independent sovereignty.

For six centuries after the so-called invitation of Rurik, the city on the Volkhof had a strange, chequered history. Rapidly it conquered the neighbouring Finnish tribes, and grew into a powerful independent state, with a territory extending to the Gulf of Finland, and northwards to the White Sea. At the same time its commercial importance increased, and it became an outpost of the Hanseatic League. In this work the descendants of Rurik played an important part, but they were always kept in strict subordination to the popular will. Political freedom kept pace with commercial prosperity. What means Rurik employed for establishing and preserving order

* Strinnholm, "Die Vikingerzüge" (Hamburg, 1839), I., p. 135.

we know not, but the chronicles show that his successors in Novgorod possessed merely such authority as was freely granted them by the people. The supreme power resided, not in the prince, but in the assembly of the citizens called together in the market-place by the sound of the great bell. This assembly made laws for the prince as well as for the people, entered into alliances with foreign powers, declared war, and concluded peace, imposed taxes, raised troops, and not only elected the magistrates, but also judged and deposed them when it thought fit. The prince was little more than the hired commander of the troops and the president of the judicial administration. When entering on his functions he had to take a solemn oath that he would faithfully observe the ancient laws and usages, and if he failed to fulfil his promise he was sure to be summarily deposed and expelled. The people had an old rhymed proverb, "Koli khud knyaz, tak v gryaz!" ("If the prince is bad, into the mud with him!"), and they habitually acted according to it. So unpleasant, indeed, was the task of ruling those sturdy, stiff-necked burghers, that some princes refused to undertake it, and others, having tried it for a time, voluntarily laid down their authority and departed. But these frequent depositions and abdications—as many as thirty took place in the course of a single century—did not permanently disturb the existing order of things. The descendants of Rurik were numerous, and there were always plenty of candidates for the vacant post. The municipal republic continued to grow in strength and in riches, and during the thirteenth and fourteenth century it proudly styled itself "Lord Novgorod the Great" (*Gospodin Veliki Novgorod*).

"Then came a change, as all things human change." To the east arose the principality of

Moscow—not an old, rich municipal republic, but a young, vigorous State, ruled by a line of crafty, energetic, ambitious, and unscrupulous princes of the Rurik stock, who were freeing the country from the Tartar yoke and gradually annexing by fair means and foul the neighbouring principalities to their own dominions. At the same time, and in a similar manner, the Lithuanian Princes to the westward united various small principalities, and formed a large independent State. Thus Novgorod found itself in a critical position. Under a strong Government it might have held its own against these rivals and successfully maintained its independence, but its strength was already undermined by internal dissensions. Political liberty had led to anarchy. Again and again on that great open space where the national monument now stands, and in the market-place on the other side of the river, scenes of disorder and bloodshed took place, and more than once on the bridge battles were fought by contending factions. Sometimes it was a contest between rival families, and sometimes a struggle between the municipal aristocracy, who sought to monopolise the political power, and the common people, who wished to have a large share in the administration. A State thus divided against itself could not long resist the aggressive tendencies of powerful neighbours. Artful diplomacy could but postpone the evil day, and it required no great political foresight to predict that sooner or later Novgorod must become Lithuanian or Muscovite. The great families inclined to Lithuania, but the popular party and the clergy, disliking Roman Catholicism, looked to Moscow for assistance, and the Grand Princes of Muscovy ultimately won the prize.

The barbarous way in which the Grand Princes effected the annexation shows how thoroughly they

had imbibed the spirit of Tartar statesmanship. Thousands of families were transported to Moscow, and Muscovite families put in their place; and when, in spite of this, the old spirit revived, Ivan the Terrible determined to apply the method of physical extermination, which he had found so effectual in breaking the power of his own nobles. Advancing with a large army, which met with no resistance, he devastated the country with fire and sword, and during a residence of five weeks in the town, he put the inhabitants to death with a ruthless ferocity which has perhaps never been surpassed even by Oriental despots. If those old walls could speak they would have many a horrible tale to tell. Enough has been preserved in the chronicles to give us some idea of this awful time. Monks and priests were subjected to the Tartar punishment called *pravezh*, which consisted in tying the victim to a stake, and flogging him daily until a certain sum of money was paid for his release. The merchants and officials were tortured with fire, and then thrown from the bridge with their wives and children into the river. Lest any of them should escape by swimming, boatfuls of soldiers despatched those who were not killed by the fall. At the present day there is a curious bubbling immediately below the bridge, which prevents the water from freezing in winter, and according to popular belief this is caused by the spirits of the terrible Tsar's victims. Of those who were murdered in the villages there is no record, but in the town alone no less than 60,000 human beings are said to have been butchered—an awful hecatomb on the altar of national unity and autocratic power!

This tragic scene, which occurred in 1570, closes the history of Novgorod as an independent State. Its real independence had long since ceased to exist, and

now the last spark of the old spirit was extinguished. The Tsars could not suffer even a shadow of political independence to exist within their dominions.

In the old days, when many Hanseatic merchants annually visited the city, and when the market-place, the bridge, and the Kremlin were often the scene of violent political struggles, Novgorod must have been an interesting place to live in; but now its glory has departed, and in respect of social resources it is not even a first-rate provincial town. Kief, Kharkof, and other towns which are situated at a greater distance from the capital, in districts fertile enough to induce the nobles to farm their own land, are in their way little semi-independent centres of civilisation. They contain a theatre, a library, two or three clubs, and large houses belonging to rich landed proprietors, who spend the summer on their estates and come into town for the winter months. These proprietors, together with the resident officials, form a numerous society, and during the winter, dinner-parties, balls, and other social gatherings are by no means infrequent. In Novgorod the society is much more limited. It does not, like Kief, Kharkof, and Kazan, possess a university, and it contains no houses belonging to wealthy nobles. The few proprietors of the province who live on their estates, and are rich enough to spend part of the year in town, prefer St. Petersburg for their winter residence. The society, therefore, is composed exclusively of officials and of the officers who happen to be quartered in the town or the immediate vicinity.

Of all the people whose acquaintance I made at Novgorod, I can recall only two men who did not occupy some official position, civil or military. One of these was a retired doctor, who was attempting to farm on scientific principles, and who, I believe, soon afterwards gave up the

attempt and migrated elsewhere. The other was a Polish bishop, who had been compromised in the insurrection of 1863, and was condemned to live here under police supervision. This latter could scarcely be said to belong to the society of the place; though he sometimes appeared at the unceremonious weekly receptions given by the Governor, and was invariably treated by all present with marked respect, he could not but feel that he was in a false position, and he was rarely or never seen in other houses.

The official circle of a town like Novgorod is sure to contain a good many people of average education and agreeable manners, but it is sure to be neither brilliant nor interesting. Though it is constantly undergoing a gradual renovation by the received system of frequently transferring officials from one town to another, it preserves faithfully, in spite of the new blood which it thus receives, its essentially languid character. When a new official arrives he exchanges visits with all the notables, and for a few days he produces quite a sensation in the little community. If he appears at social gatherings he is much talked to, and if he does not appear he is much talked about. His former history is repeatedly narrated, and his various merits and defects assiduously discussed.

If he is married, and has brought his wife with him, the field of comment and discussion is very much enlarged. The first time that Madame appears in society she is "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." Her features, her complexion, her hair, her dress, and her jewellery are carefully noted and criticised. Perhaps she has brought with her, from the capital or from abroad, some dresses of the newest fashion. As soon as this is discovered she at once becomes an object of special curiosity to the ladies, and of

envious jealousy to those who regard as a personal grievance the presence of a toilette finer or more fashionable than their own. Her demeanour, too, is very carefully observed. If she is friendly and affable in manner, she is patronised; if she is distant and reserved, she is condemned as proud and pretentious. In either case she is pretty sure to form a close intimacy with some one of the older female residents, and for a few weeks the two ladies are inseparable, till some incautious word or act disturbs the new-born friendship, and the devoted friends become bitter enemies. Voluntarily or involuntarily the husbands get mixed up in the quarrel. Highly undesirable qualities are discovered in the characters of all parties concerned, and are made the subject of unfriendly comment. Then the feud subsides, and some new feud of a similar kind comes to occupy the public attention. Mrs. A. wonders how her friends Mr. and Mrs. B. can afford to lose considerable sums every evening at cards, and suspects that they are getting into debt or starving themselves and their children; in her humble opinion they would do well to give fewer supper parties, and to refrain from poisoning their guests. The bosom friend to whom this is related retails it directly or indirectly to Mrs. B., and Mrs. B. naturally retaliates. Here is a new quarrel, which for some time affords material for conversation.

When there is no quarrel, there is sure to be a bit of scandal afloat. Though Russian provincial society is not at all prude, and leans rather to the side of extreme leniency, it cannot entirely overlook *les convenances*. Madame C. has always a large number of male admirers, and to this there can be no reasonable objection so long as her husband does not complain, but really she parades her preference for

Mr. X. at balls and parties a little too conspicuously. Then there is Madame D., with the big dreamy eyes. How can she remain in the place after her husband was killed in a duel by a brother officer? Ostensibly the cause of the quarrel was a trifling incident at the card-table, but everyone knows that in reality she was the cause of the deadly encounter. And so on, and so on. In the absence of graver interests society naturally bestows inordinate attention on the private affairs of its members; and quarrelling, backbiting, and scandal-mongery help indolent people to kill the time that hangs heavily on their hands.

Potent as these intruments are, they are not sufficient to kill all the leisure hours. In the forenoons the gentlemen are occupied with their official duties, whilst the ladies go out shopping or pay visits, and devote any time that remains to their household duties and their children; but the day's work is over about four o'clock, and the long evening remains to be filled up. The siesta may dispose of an hour or an hour and a-half, but about seven o'clock some definite occupation has to be found. As it is impossible to devote the whole evening to discussing the ordinary news of the day, recourse is almost invariably had to card-playing, which is indulged in to an extent that we had no conception of in England until Bridge was imported. Hour after hour the Russians of both sexes will sit in a hot room, filled with a constantly-renewed cloud of tobacco smoke—in the production of which most of the ladies take part—and silently play "Préférence," "Yarolash," or Bridge. Those who for some reason are obliged to be alone can amuse themselves with "Patience," in which no partner is required. In the other games the stakes are commonly very small, but the sittings are often continued so long that a player may win or lose two

or three pounds sterling. It is no unusual thing for gentlemen to play for eight or nine hours at a time. At the weekly club dinners, before coffee had been served, nearly all present used to rush off impatiently to the card-room, and sit there placidly from five o'clock in the afternoon till one or two o'clock in the morning! When I asked my friends why they devoted so much time to this unprofitable occupation, they always gave me pretty much the same answer: "What are we to do? We have been reading or writing official papers all day, and in the evening we like to have a little relaxation. When we come together we have very little to talk about, for we have all read the daily papers and nothing more. The best thing we can do is to sit down at the card-table, where we can spend our time pleasantly, without the necessity of talking."

In addition to the daily papers, some people read the monthly periodicals—big, thick volumes, containing several serious articles on historical and social subjects, sections of one or two novels, satirical sketches, and a long review of home and foreign politics on the model of those in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Several of these periodicals are very ably conducted, and offer to their readers a large amount of valuable information; but I have noticed that the leaves of the more serious part often remain uncut. The translation of a sensation novel by the latest French or English favourite finds many more readers than an article by an historian or a political economist. As to books, they seem to be very little read, for during all the time I lived in Novgorod I never discovered a bookseller's shop, and when I required books I had to get them sent from St. Petersburg. The local administration, it is true, conceived the idea of forming a museum and circulating library, but in

my time the project was never realised. Of all the magnificent projects that are formed in Russia, only a very small percentage come into existence, and these are too often very short-lived. The Russians have learned theoretically what are the wants of the most advanced civilisation, and are ever ready to rush into the grand schemes which their theoretical knowledge suggests; but very few of them really and permanently feel these wants, and consequently the institutions artificially formed to satisfy them very soon languish and die. In the provincial towns the shops for the sale of gastronomic delicacies spring up and flourish, whilst shops for the sale of intellectual food are rarely to be met with.

About the beginning of December the ordinary monotony of Novgorod life is a little relieved by the annual Provincial Assembly, which sits daily for two or three weeks and discusses the economic wants of the province.* During this time a good many landed proprietors, who habitually live on their estates or in St. Petersburg, collect in the town, and enliven a little the ordinary society. But as Christmas approaches the deputies disperse, and again the town becomes enshrouded in that "eternal stillness" (*vétchnaya tishiná*) which a native poet has declared to be the essential characteristic of Russian provincial life.

* Of these assemblies I shall have more to say when I come to describe the local self-government.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TOWNS AND THE MERCANTILE CLASSES.

General Character of Russian Towns—Scarcity of Towns in Russia—Why the Urban Element in the Population is so Small—History of Russian Municipal Institutions—Unsuccessful Efforts to create a *Tiers-état*—Merchants, Burghers, and Artisans—Town Council—A Rich Merchant—His House—His Love of Ostentation—His Conception of Aristocracy—Official Decorations—Ignorance and Dishonesty of the Commercial Classes—Symptoms of Change.

THOSE who wish to enjoy the illusions produced by scene painting and stage decorations should never go behind the scenes. In like manner he who wishes to preserve the delusion that Russian provincial towns are picturesque should never enter them, but content himself with viewing them from a distance.

However imposing they may look when seen from the outside, they will be found on closer inspection, with very few exceptions, to be little more than villages in disguise. If they have not a positively rustic, they have at least a suburban, appearance. The streets are straight and wide, and are either miserably paved or not paved at all. *Trottoirs* are not considered indispensable. The houses are built of wood or brick, generally one-storeyed, and separated from each other by spacious yards. Many of them do not condescend to turn their façades to the street. The general impression produced is that the majority of the burghers have come from the country, and have brought their country houses with them. There are few or no shops with merchandise tastefully arranged in the window to tempt the passer-by. If you wish to make purchases

you must go to the Gostinny Dvor,* or Bazaar, which consists of long symmetrical rows of low-roofed, dimly-lighted stores, with a colonnade in front. This is the place where merchants most do congregate, but it presents nothing of that bustle and activity which we are accustomed to associate with commercial life. The shopkeepers stand at their doors or loiter about in the immediate vicinity waiting for customers. From the scarcity of these latter I should say that when sales are effected the profits must be enormous.

In the other parts of the town the air of solitude and languor is still more conspicuous. In the great square, or by the side of the promenade—if the town is fortunate to have one—cows or horses may be seen grazing tranquilly, without being at all conscious of the incongruity of their position. And, indeed, it would be strange if they had any such consciousness, for it does not exist in the minds either of the police or of the inhabitants. At night the streets may be lighted merely with a few oil-lamps, which do little more than render the darkness visible, so that cautious citizens returning home late often provide themselves with lanterns. As late as the Sixties the learned historian, Pogódin, then a town councillor of Moscow, opposed the lighting of the city with gas on the ground that those who chose to go out at night should carry their lamps with them. The objection was over-ruled, and Moscow is now fairly well lit, but the provincial towns are still far from being on the same level. Some retain their old primitive arrangements, while others enjoy the luxury of electric lighting.

The scarcity of large towns in Russia is not less remarkable than their rustic appearance. According

* These words mean literally the Guests' Court or Yard. The Gosti—a word which is etymologically the same as our "host" and "guest"—were originally the merchants who traded with other towns or other countries.

to the last census (1897) the number of towns, officially so-called, is 1,321, but about three-fifths of them have under 5,000 inhabitants; only 104 have over 25,000, and only 19 over 100,000. These figures indicate plainly that the urban element of the population is relatively small, and it is declared by the official statisticians to be only 14 per cent., as against 72 per cent. in Great Britain; but it is now increasing rapidly. When the first edition of this work was published, in 1877, European Russia in the narrower sense of the term—excluding Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Lithuania, Poland, and the Caucasus—had only eleven towns with a population of over 50,000, and now there are thirty-four: that is to say, the number of such towns has more than trebled. In the other portions of the country a similar increase has taken place. The towns which have become important industrial and commercial centres have naturally grown most rapidly. For example, in a period of twelve years (1885–97) the populations of Lodz, of Ekaterinoslaf, of Baku, of Yaroslavl, and of Libau, have more than doubled. In the five largest towns of the Empire—St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Odessa and Lodz—the aggregate population rose during the same twelve years from 2,423,000 to 3,590,000, or nearly 50 per cent. In ten other towns, with populations varying from 50,000 to 282,000, the aggregate rose from 780,000 to 1,382,000, or about 77 per cent.

That Russia should have taken so long to assimilate herself in this respect to Western Europe is to be explained by the geographical and political conditions. Her population was not hemmed in by natural or artificial frontiers strong enough to restrain their expansive tendencies. To the North, the East, and the South-East there was a boundless expanse of

fertile, uncultivated land, offering a tempting field for emigration; and the peasantry have ever shown themselves ready to take advantage of their opportunities. Instead of improving their primitive system of agriculture, which requires an enormous area and rapidly exhausts the soil, they have always found it easier and more profitable to emigrate and take possession of the virgin land beyond. Thus the territory—sometimes with the aid of, and sometimes in spite of, the Government—has constantly expanded, and has already reached the Polar Ocean, the Pacific, and the northern offshoots of the Himalayas. The little district around the sources of the Dnieper has grown into a mighty empire, comprising one-seventh of the land surface of the globe. Prolific as the Russian race is, its powers of reproduction could not keep pace with its territorial expansion, and consequently the country is still very thinly peopled. According to the latest census (1897) in the whole empire there are under 130 millions of inhabitants, and the average density of population is only about fifteen to the English square mile. Even the most densely populated provinces, including Moscow with its 988,000 inhabitants, cannot show more than 189 to the English square mile, whereas England has about 400. A people that has such an abundance of land, and can support itself by agriculture, is not naturally disposed to devote itself to industry and congregate largely in cities.

For many generations there were other powerful influences working in the same direction. Of these the most important was serfage, which was not abolished till 1861. That institution, and the administrative system of which it formed an essential part, tended to prevent the growth of the towns by hemming the natural movements of the population.

Peasants, for example, who learned trades, and who ought to have drifted naturally into the burgher class, were mostly retained by the master on his estate, where artisans of all sorts were daily wanted, and the few who were sent to seek work in the towns were not allowed to settle there permanently.

Thus the insignificance of the Russian towns is to be attributed mainly to two causes. The abundance of land tended to prevent the development of industry, and the little industry which did exist was prevented by serfage from collecting in the towns. But this explanation is evidently incomplete. The same causes existed during the Middle Ages in Central Europe, and yet, in spite of them, flourishing cities grew up and played an important part in the social and political history of Germany. In these cities collected traders and artisans, forming a distinct social class, distinguished from the nobles on the one hand, and the surrounding peasantry on the other, by peculiar occupations, peculiar aims, peculiar intellectual physiognomy, and peculiar moral conceptions. Why did these important towns and this burgher class not likewise come into existence in Russia, in spite of the two preventive causes above mentioned?

To discuss this question fully it would be necessary to enter into certain debated points of mediæval history. All I can do here is to indicate what seems to me the true explanation.

In Central Europe, all through the Middle Ages, a perpetual struggle went on between the various political factors of which society was composed, and the important towns were in a certain sense the products of this struggle. They were preserved and fostered by the mutual rivalry of the Sovereign, the Feudal Nobility, and the Church; and those who desired to live by trade or industry settled in them in

order to enjoy the protection and immunities which they afforded. In Russia there was never any political struggle of this kind. As soon as the Grand Princes of Moscow, in the sixteenth century, threw off the yoke of the Tartars, and made themselves Tsars of all Russia, their power was irresistible and uncontested. Complete masters of the situation, they organised their country as they thought fit. At first their policy was favourable to the development of the towns. Perceiving that the mercantile and industrial classes might be made a rich source of revenue, they separated them from the peasantry, gave them the exclusive right of trading, prevented the other classes from competing with them, and freed them from the authority of the landed proprietors. Had they carried out this policy in a cautious, rational way, they might have created a rich burgher class; but they acted with true Oriental short-sightedness, and defeated their own purpose, by imposing inordinately heavy taxes, and treating the urban population as their serfs. The richer merchants were forced to serve as custom-house officers—often at a great distance from their domiciles* —and artisans were yearly summoned to Moscow to do work for the Tsars without remuneration.

Besides this, the system of taxation was radically defective and the members of the local administration, who received no pay and were practically free from control, were merciless in their exactions. In a word, the Tsars used their power so stupidly and so recklessly that the industrial and trading population, instead of fleeing to the towns to secure protection, fled from them to escape oppression. At length this emigration from the towns assumed such dimensions that it was found necessary to prevent it by

* Merchants from Yaroslavl, for instance, were sent to Astrakhan to collect the custom-dues.

administrative and legislative measures; and the urban population were legally fixed in the towns as the rural population were fixed to the soil. Those who fled were brought back as runaways, and those who attempted flight a second time were ordered to be flogged and transported to Siberia.*

With the eighteenth century began a new era in the history of the towns and of the urban population. Peter the Great observed, during his travels in Western Europe, that national wealth and prosperity reposed chiefly on the enterprising, educated middle classes, and he attributed the poverty of his own country to the absence of this burgher element. Might not such a class be created in Russia? Peter unhesitatingly assumed that it might, and set himself at once to create it in a simple, straightforward way. Foreign artisans were imported into his dominions, and foreign merchants were invited to trade with his subjects; young Russians were sent abroad to learn the useful arts; efforts were made to disseminate practical knowledge by the translation of foreign books and the foundation of schools; all kinds of trade were encouraged, and various industrial enterprises were organised. At the same time the administration of the towns was thoroughly reorganised after the model of the ancient free towns of Germany. In place of the old organisation, which was a slightly modified form of the rural Commune, they received German municipal institutions, with burgomasters, town councils, courts of justice, guilds for the merchants, trade corporations (*tsekhi*) for the artisans, and an endless list of instructions regarding the development of trade and industry, the building of hospitals, sanitary precautions, the founding of schools,

* *See* the "Ulozhenie" (i.e. the laws of Alexis, father of Peter the Great), cap. xix., § 13.

the dispensation of justice, the organisation of the police, and similar matters.

Catherine II. followed in the same track. If she did less for trade and industry, she did more in the way of legislating and writing grandiloquent manifestoes. In the course of her historical studies she had learned, as she proclaims in one of her manifestoes, that "from remotest antiquity we everywhere find the memory of town builders elevated to the same level as the memory of legislators, and we see that heroes, famous for their victories, hoped by town building to give immortality to their names." As the securing of immortality for her own name was her chief aim in life, she acted in accordance with historical precedent, and created 216 towns in the short space of twenty-three years. This seems a great work, but it did not satisfy her ambition. She was not only a student of history, but was at the same time a warm admirer of the fashionable political philosophy of her time. That philosophy paid much attention to the *tiers-état*, which was then acquiring in France great political importance, and Catherine thought that, as she had created a Noblesse on the French model, she might also create a *bourgeoisie*. For this purpose she modified the municipal organisation created by her great predecessor, and granted to all the towns an Imperial Charter. This charter remained without essential modification until the publication of the new Municipality Law in 1870.

The efforts of the Government to create a rich, intelligent *tiers-état* were not attended with much success. Their influence was always more apparent in official documents than in real life. The great mass of the population remained serfs, fixed to the soil, whilst the nobles—that is to say, all who possessed a little education—were required for the military and

civil services. Those who were sent abroad to learn the useful arts learned little, and made little use of the knowledge which they acquired. On their return to their native country they very soon fell victims to the soporific influence of the surrounding social atmosphere. The "town building" had as little practical result. It was an easy matter to create any number of towns in the official sense of the term. To transform a village into a town, it was necessary merely to prepare an *izbá*, or log-house, for the district court, another for the police office, a third for the prison, and so on. On an appointed day the Governor of the province arrived in the village, collected the officials appointed to serve in the newly-constructed or newly-arranged log-houses, ordered a simple religious ceremony to be performed by the priest, caused a formal act to be drawn up, and then declared the town to be "opened." All this required very little creative effort; to create a spirit of commercial and industrial enterprise among the population was a more difficult matter, and could not be effected by Imperial ukaz.

To animate the newly imported municipal institutions, which had no root in the traditions and habits of the people, was a task of equal difficulty. In the West these institutions had been slowly devised in the course of centuries to meet real, keenly-felt, practical wants. In Russia they were adopted for the purpose of creating those wants which were not yet felt. Let the reader imagine our Board of Trade supplying the masters of fishing smacks with accurate charts, learned treatises on navigation, and detailed instructions for the proper ventilation of ships' cabins, and he will have some idea of the effect which Peter's legislation had upon the towns. The office bearers, elected against their will, were hopelessly bewildered by the complicated procedure, and were incapable of under-

standing the numerous ukazes, which prescribed to them their multifarious duties, and threatened the most merciless punishments for sins of omission and commission. Soon, however, it was discovered that the threats were not nearly so dreadful as they seemed; and accordingly those municipal authorities who were to protect and enlighten the burghers "forgot the fear of God and the Tsar," and extorted so unblushingly that it was found necessary to place them under the control of Government officials.

The chief practical result of the efforts made by Peter and Catherine to create a *bourgeoisie* was that the inhabitants of the towns were more systematically arranged in categories for the purpose of taxation, and that the taxes were increased. All those parts of the new administration which had no direct relation to the fiscal interests of the Government had very little vitality in them. The whole system had been arbitrarily imposed on the people, and had as motive only the Imperial will. Had that motive power been withdrawn and the burghers left to regulate their own municipal affairs, the system would immediately have collapsed. *Rathhaus*, burgomasters, guilds, aldermen, and all the other lifeless shadows which had been called into existence by Imperial ukaz, would instantly have vanished into space. In this fact we have one of the characteristic traits of Russian historical development compared with that of Western Europe. In the West, monarchy had to struggle with municipal institutions to prevent them from becoming too powerful; in Russia, it had to struggle with them to prevent them from committing suicide or dying of inanition.

According to Catherine's legislation, which remained in force until 1870, and still exists in some of its main features, the towns were divided into three

categories: (1) government towns (*gubernskiye gorodá*) —that is to say, the chief towns of provinces or "governments" (*gubernii*) — in which are concentrated the various organs of provincial administration; (2) district towns (*uyezdniye gorodá*), in which resides the administration of the districts (*uyezdi*) into which the provinces are divided; and (3) supernumerary towns (*zashtatniye gorodá*), which have no particular significance in the territorial administration.

In all these the municipal organisation is the same. Leaving out of consideration those persons who happen to reside in the towns but in reality belong to the noblesse, the clergy, or the lower ranks of officials, we may say that the town population is composed of three groups: the merchants (*kuptsi*), the burghers in the narrower sense of the term (*meshtchanye*), and the artisans (*tsekhoviye*). These categories are not hereditary castes, like the nobles, the clergy, and the peasantry. A noble may become a merchant, or a man may be one year a burgher, the next year an artisan, and the third year a merchant, if he changes his occupation and pays the necessary dues. But the categories form, for the time being, distinct corporations, each possessing a peculiar organisation and peculiar privileges and obligations.

Of these three groups, the first in the scale of dignity is that of the merchants. It is chiefly recruited from the burghers and the peasantry. Anyone who wishes to engage in commerce inscribes himself in one of the three guilds, according to the amount of his capital and the nature of the operations in which he wishes to embark, and as soon as he has paid the required dues he becomes officially a merchant. As soon as he ceases to pay these dues he ceases to be a merchant in the legal sense of the term,

and returns to the class to which he formerly belonged. There are some families whose members have belonged to the merchant class for several generations, and the law speaks about a certain "velvet-book" (*bárkhatnaya kniga*) in which their names should be inscribed, but in reality they do not form a distinct category, and they descend at once from their privileged position as soon as they cease to pay the annual guild dues.

The artisans form the connecting link between the town population and the peasantry, for peasants often enrol themselves in the trades corporations or *tsekhi*, without severing their connection with the rural Communes to which they belong. Each trade or handicraft constitutes a *tsekh*, at the head of which stands an elder and two assistants, elected by the members; and all the *tsekhi* together form a corporation under an elected head (*Remèslenny Golová*), assisted by a council composed of the elders of the various *tsekhi*. It is the duty of this council and its president to regulate all matters connected with the *tsekhi*, and to see that the multifarious regulations regarding masters, journeymen, and apprentices are duly observed.

The nondescript class, composed of those who are inscribed as permanent inhabitants of the towns but who do not belong to any guild or *tsekh*, constitutes what is called the burghers in the narrower sense of the term. Like the other two categories, they form a separate corporation with an elder and an administrative bureau.

Some idea of the relative numerical strength of these three categories may be obtained from the following figures. Thirty years ago in European Russia the merchant class (including wives and children) numbered about 466,000, the burghers about 4,033,000,

and the artisans about 260,000. The numbers according to the last census are not yet available.

In 1870 the entire municipal administration was reorganised on modern West-European principles, and the Town Council (*Gorodskáya Dúma*), which formed under the previous system the connecting link between the old-fashioned corporations, and was composed exclusively of members of these bodies, became a genuine representative body composed of householders, irrespective of the social class to which they might belong. A noble, provided he was a house proprietor, could become Town Councillor or Mayor, and in this way a certain amount of vitality and a progressive spirit were infused into the municipal administration. As a consequence of this change the schools, hospitals, and other benevolent institutions were much improved, the streets were kept cleaner and somewhat better paved, and for a time it seemed as if the towns in Russia might gradually rise to the level of those of Western Europe. But the charm of novelty, which so often works wonders in Russia, soon wore off. After a few years of strenuous effort the best citizens no longer came forward as candidates, and the office bearers selected no longer displayed zeal and intelligence in the discharge of their duties.

In these circumstances the Government felt called upon again to intervene. By a decree dated 11th June, 1892, it introduced a new series of reforms, by which the municipal self-government was placed more under the direction and control of the centralised bureaucracy, and the attendance of the Town Councillors at the periodical meetings was declared to be obligatory, recalcitrant members being threatened with reprimands and fines.

This last fact speaks volumes for the low vitality

of the institutions and the prevalent popular apathy with regard to municipal affairs. Nor was the unsatisfactory state of things much improved by the new reforms; on the contrary, the increased interference of the regular officials tended rather to weaken the vitality of the urban self-government, and the so-called reform was pretty generally condemned as a needlessly reactionary measure. We have here, in fact, a case of what has often occurred in the administrative history of the Russian Empire since the time of Peter the Great, and to which I shall again have occasion to refer. The central authority, finding itself incompetent to do all that is required of it, and wishing to make a display of Liberalism, accords large concessions in the direction of local autonomy; and when it discovers that the new institutions do not accomplish all that was expected of them, and are not quite so subservient and obsequious as is considered desirable, it returns in a certain measure to the old principles of centralised bureaucracy.

The great development of trade and industry in recent years has of course enriched the mercantile classes, and has introduced into them a more highly educated element, drawn chiefly from the Noblesse, which formerly eschewed such occupations; but it has not yet affected very deeply the mode of life of those who have sprung from the old merchant families and the peasantry. When a merchant, contractor, or manufacturer of the old type becomes wealthy, he builds for himself a fine house, or buys and thoroughly repairs the house of some ruined noble, and spends money freely on parquet floors, large mirrors, malachite tables, grand pianos by the best makers, and other articles of furniture made of the most costly materials. Occasionally—especially on the occasion

of a marriage or a death in the family—he will give magnificent banquets, and expend enormous sums on gigantic sterlets, choice sturgeons, foreign fruits, champagne, and all manner of costly delicacies. But this lavish, ostentatious expenditure does not affect the ordinary current of his daily life. As you enter those gaudily furnished rooms you can perceive at a glance that they are not for ordinary use. You notice a rigid symmetry and an indescribable bareness which inevitably suggest that the original arrangements of the upholsterer have never been modified or supplemented. The truth is that by far the greater part of the house is used only on state occasions. The host and his family live down-stairs in small, dirty rooms, furnished in a very different, and for them more comfortable, style. At ordinary times the fine rooms are closed, and the fine furniture carefully covered.

If you make a *visite de politesse* after an entertainment, you will probably have some difficulty in gaining admission by the front door. When you have knocked or rung several times, someone will come round from the back regions and ask you what you want. Then follows another long pause, and at last footsteps are heard approaching from within. The bolts are drawn, the door is opened, and you are led up to a spacious drawing-room. At the wall opposite the windows there is sure to be a sofa, and before it an oval table. At each end of the table, and at right angles to the sofa, there will be a row of three arm-chairs. The other chairs will be symmetrically arranged round the room. In a few minutes the host will appear, in his long double-breasted black coat and well-polished long boots. His hair is parted in the middle, and his beard shows no trace of scissors or razor.

After the customary greetings have been ex-

changed, glasses of tea, with slices of lemon and preserves, or perhaps a bottle of champagne, are brought in by way of refreshment. The female members of the family you must not expect to see, unless you are an intimate friend; for the merchants still retain something of that female seclusion which was in vogue among the upper classes before the time of Peter the Great. The host himself will probably be an intelligent, but totally uneducated and decidedly taciturn, man. About the weather and the crops he may talk fluently enough, but he will not show much inclination to go beyond these topics. You may, perhaps, desire to converse with him on the subject with which he is best acquainted—the trade in which he is himself engaged; but if you make the attempt, you will certainly not gain much information, and you may possibly meet with such an incident as once happened to my travelling companion, a Russian gentleman who had been commissioned by two learned societies to collect information regarding the grain trade. When he called on a merchant who had promised to assist him in his investigations, he was hospitably received; but when he began to speak about the grain trade of the district, the merchant suddenly interrupted him, and proposed to tell him a story. The story was as follows:—

Once on a time a rich landed proprietor had a son, who was a thoroughly spoilt child; and one day the boy said to his father that he wished all the young serfs to come and sing before the door of the house. After some attempts at dissuasion the request was granted, and the young people assembled; but as soon as they began to sing, the boy rushed out and drove them away.

When the merchant had told this apparently pointless story at great length, and with much

circumstantial detail, he paused a little, poured some tea into his saucer, drank it off, and then inquired, "Now what do you think was the reason of this strange conduct?"

My friend replied that the riddle surpassed his powers of divination.

"Well," said the merchant, looking hard at him, with a knowing grin, "there was no reason; and all the boy could say was, 'Go away, go away! I've changed my mind; I've changed my mind'" (*poshli von; otkhotyél*).

There was no possibility of mistaking the point of the story. My friend took the hint and departed.

The Russian merchant's love of ostentation is of a peculiar kind—something entirely different from English snobbery. He may delight in gaudy reception rooms, magnificent dinners, fast trotters, costly furs; or he may display his riches by princely donations to churches, monasteries, or benevolent institutions; but in all this he never affects to be other than he really is. He habitually wears a costume which designates plainly his social position; he makes no attempt to adopt fine manners or elegant tastes; and he never seeks to gain admission to what is called in Russia *la société*. Having no desire to seem what he is not, he has a plain, unaffected manner, and sometimes a quiet dignity, which contrasts favourably with the affected manner of those nobles of the lower ranks who make pretensions to being highly educated and strive to adopt the outward forms of French culture. At his great dinners, it is true, the merchant likes to see among his guests as many "generals"—that is to say, official personages—as possible, and especially those who happen to have a *grand cordon*; but he never dreams of thereby establishing an intimacy with these personages, or of being invited

by them in return. It is perfectly understood by both parties that nothing of the kind is meant. The invitation is given and accepted from quite different motives. The merchant has the satisfaction of seeing at his table men of high official rank, and feels that the consideration which he enjoys among people of his own class is thereby augmented. If he succeeds in obtaining the presence of three generals, he obtains a victory over a rival who cannot obtain more than two. The general, on his side, gets a first-rate dinner, *à la russe*, and acquires an undefined right to request subscriptions for public objects or benevolent institutions.

Of course this undefined right is commonly nothing more than a mere tacit understanding, but in certain cases the subject is expressly mentioned. I know of one case in which a regular bargain was made. A Moscow magnate was invited by a merchant to a dinner, and consented to go in full uniform, with all his decorations, on condition that the merchant should subscribe a certain sum to a benevolent institution in which he was particularly interested. It is whispered that such bargains are sometimes made, not on behalf of benevolent institutions, but simply in the interest of the gentleman who accepts the invitation. I cannot believe that there are many official personages who would consent to let themselves out as table decorations, but that it may happen is proved by the following incident, which accidentally came to my knowledge. A rich merchant of the town of T—— once requested the Governor of the Province to honour a family festivity with his presence, and added that he would consider it a special favour if the "Governoress" would enter an appearance. To this latter request his Excellency made many objections, and at last let

the petitioner understand that her Excellency could not possibly be present because she had no velvet dress that could bear comparison with those of several merchants' wives in the town. Two days after the interview a piece of the finest velvet that could be procured in Moscow was received by the Governor from an unknown donor, and his wife was thus enabled to be present at the festivity, to the complete satisfaction of all parties concerned.

It is worthy of remark that the merchants recognise no aristocracy but that of official rank. Many merchants would willingly give twenty pounds for the presence of an "actual State-Councillor," who perhaps never heard of his grandfather, but who can show a *grand cordon;* whilst they would not give twenty pence for the presence of an undecorated Prince without official rank, though he might be able to trace his pedigree up to the half-mythical Rurik. Of the latter they would probably say, "Kto ikh znaet?" —who knows what sort of a fellow he is? The former, on the contrary, whoever his father and grandfather may have been, possesses unmistakable marks of the Tsar's favour, which, in the merchant's opinion, is infinitely more important than any rights or pretensions founded on hereditary titles or long pedigrees.

Some marks of Imperial favour the old-fashioned merchants strive to obtain for themselves. They do not dream of *grands cordons*—that is far beyond their most sanguine expectations—but they do all in their power to obtain those lesser decorations which are granted to the mercantile class. For this purpose the most common expedient is a liberal subscription to some benevolent institution, and occasionally a regular bargain is made. I know of at least one instance where the kind of decoration was expressly stipulated.

The affair illustrates so well the commercial character of these transactions that I venture to state the facts as related to me by the official chiefly concerned. A merchant subscribed to a society which enjoyed the patronage of a Grand Duchess a considerable sum of money, under the express condition that he should receive in return a St. Vladimir Cross. Instead of the desired decoration, which was considered too much for the sum subscribed, a cross of St. Stanislas was granted; but the donor was dissatisfied with the latter, and demanded that his money should be returned to him. The demand had to be complied with, and as an Imperial gift cannot be retracted, the merchant had his Stanislas Cross for nothing.

This traffic in decorations has had its natural result. Like paper money issued in too large quantities, the decorations have fallen in value. The gold medals which were formerly much coveted and worn with pride by the rich merchants—suspended by a ribbon round the neck—are now little sought after. In like manner the inordinate respect for official personages has considerably diminished. Fifty years ago the provincial merchants vied with each other in their desire to entertain any great dignitary who honoured their town with a visit, but now they seek rather to avoid this expensive and barren honour. When they do accept the honour, they fulfil the duties of hospitality in a most liberal spirit. I have sometimes, when living as an honoured guest in a rich merchant's house, found it difficult to obtain anything simpler than sterlet, sturgeon, and champagne.

The two great blemishes on the character of the Russian merchants as a class are, according to general opinion, their ignorance and their dishonesty. As to the former of these there cannot possibly be any difference of opinion. Many of them can neither read

nor write, and are forced to keep their accounts in their memory, or by means of ingenious hieroglyphics, intelligible only to the inventor. Others can decipher the calendar and the lives of the saints, can sign their names with tolerable facility, and can make the simpler arithmetical calculations with the help of the *stchety*, a little calculating instrument composed of wooden balls strung on brass wires, which resembles the "abaca" of the old Romans, and is universally used in Russia. It is only the minority who understand the mysteries of regular bookkeeping, and of these very few can make any pretensions to being educated men.

All this, however, is rapidly undergoing a radical change. Children are now much better educated than their parents, and the next generation will doubtless make further progress, so that the old-fashioned type above described is destined to disappear. Already there are not a few of the younger generation—especially among the wealthy manufacturers of Moscow—who have been educated abroad, who may be described as "*tout à fait civilisés*," and whose mode of life differs little from that of the richer nobles; but they remain outside fashionable society, and constitute a "set" of their own.

As to the dishonesty which is said to be so common among the Russian commercial classes, it is difficult to form an accurate judgment. That an enormous amount of unfair dealing does exist there can be no possible doubt, but in this matter a foreigner is likely to be unduly severe. We are apt to apply unflinchingly our own standard of commercial morality, and to forget that trade in Russia is only emerging from that primitive condition in which fixed prices and moderate profits are entirely unknown. And when we happen to detect positive dishonesty, it

seems to us especially heinous, because the trickery employed is more primitive and awkward than that to which we are accustomed. Trickery in weighing and measuring, for instance, which is by no means uncommon in Russia, is likely to make us more indignant than those ingenious methods of adulteration which are practised nearer home, and are regarded by many as almost legitimate. Besides this, foreigners who go to Russia and embark in speculations without possessing any adequate knowledge of the character, customs, and language of the people, positively invite spoliation, and ought to blame themselves rather than the people who profit by their ignorance.

All this, and much more of the same kind, may be fairly urged in mitigation of the severe judgments which foreign merchants commonly pass on Russian commercial morality, but these judgments cannot be reversed by such argumentation. The dishonesty and rascality which exist among the merchants are fully recognised by the Russians themselves. In all moral affairs the lower classes in Russia are very lenient in their judgments, and are strongly disposed, like the Americans, to admire what is called in Transatlantic phraseology "a smart man," though the smartness is known to contain a large admixture of dishonesty; and yet the *vox populi* in Russia emphatically declares that the merchants as a class are unscrupulous and dishonest. There is a rude popular play, in which the Devil, as principal *dramatis persona*, succeeds in cheating all manner and conditions of men, but is finally over-reached by a genuine Russian merchant. When this play is acted in the Carnival Theatre in St. Petersburg, the audience invariably agree with the moral of the plot.

If this play were acted in the southern towns near the coast of the Black Sea it would be necessary to

modify it considerably, for here, in company with Jews, Greeks, and Armenians, the Russian merchants seem honest by comparison. As to Greeks and Armenians, I know not which of the two nationalities deserves the palm, but it seems that both are surpassed by the Children of Israel. "How these Jews do business," I have heard a Russian merchant of this region exclaim, "I cannot understand. They buy up wheat in the villages at eleven roubles per *tchetvert*, transport it to the coast at their own expense, and sell it to the exporters at ten roubles! And yet they contrive to make a profit! It is said that the Russian trader is cunning, but here 'our brother' (*i.e.*, the Russian) can do nothing." The truth of this statement I have had abundant opportunities of confirming by personal investigations on the spot.

If I might express a general opinion regarding Russian commercial morality, I should say that trade in Russia is carried on very much on the same principles as horse-dealing in England. A man who wishes to buy or sell must trust to his own knowledge and acuteness, and if he gets the worst of a bargain or lets himself be deceived, he has himself to blame. Commercial Englishmen on arriving in Russia rarely understand this, and when they know it theoretically they are too often unable, from their ignorance of the language, the laws, and the customs of the people, to turn their theoretical knowledge to account. They indulge, therefore, at first in endless invectives against the prevailing dishonesty; but gradually, when they have paid what Germans call *Lehrgeld*, they accommodate themselves to circumstances, take large profits to counterbalance bad debts, and generally succeed—if they have sufficient energy, mother-wit, and capital—in making a very handsome income.

The old race of British merchants, however,

is rapidly dying out, and I greatly fear that the rising generation will not be equally successful. Times have changed. It is no longer possible to amass large fortunes in the old easy-going fashion. Every year the conditions alter, and the competition increases. In order to foresee, understand, and take advantage of the changes, one must have far more knowledge of the country than the men of the old school possessed, and it seems to me that the young generation have still less of that knowledge than their predecessors. Unless some change takes place in this respect, the German merchants, who have generally a much better commercial education and are much better acquainted with their adopted country, will ultimately, I believe, expel their British rivals. Already many branches of commerce formerly carried on by Englishmen have passed into their hands.

It must not be supposed that the unsatisfactory organisation of the Russian commercial world is the result of any radical peculiarity of the Russian character. All new countries have to pass through a similar state of things, and in Russia there are already premonitory symptoms of a change for the better. For the present, it is true, the extensive construction of railways and the rapid development of banks and limited liability companies have opened up a new and wide field for all kinds of commercial swindling; but, on the other hand, there are now in every large town a certain number of merchants who carry on business in the West-European manner, and have learnt by experience that honesty is the best policy. The success which many of these have obtained will doubtless cause their example to be followed. The old spirit of caste and routine which has long animated the merchant class is rapidly dis-

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PASTORAL TRIBES OF THE STEPPE.

A Journey to the Steppe Region of the South-East—The Volga—Town and Province of Samára—Further Eastward—Appearance of the Villages—Characteristic Incident—Peasant Mendacity—Explanation of the Phenomenon—I awake in Asia—A Bashkir *Aoul*—*Diner à la Tartare*—Kumyss—A Bashkir Troubadour—Honest Mehemet Zián—Actual Economic Condition of the Bashkirs throws Light on a well-known Philosophical Theory—Why a Pastoral Race adopts Agriculture—The Genuine Steppe—The Kirghiz—Letter from Genghis Khan—The Kalmyks—Nogaï Tartars—Struggle between Nomadic Hordes and Agricultural Colonists.

WHEN I had spent a couple of years or more in the northern and north-central provinces—the land of forests and of agriculture conducted on the three-field system, with here and there a town of respectable antiquity—I determined to visit, for purposes of comparison and contrast, the south-eastern region, which possesses no forests nor ancient towns, and corresponds to the Far West in the United States of America. My point of departure was Yaroslavl—a town on the right bank of the Volga to the north-east of Moscow—and thence I sailed down the river during three days on a large, comfortable steamer to Samára, the chief town of the province or "government" of the name. Here I left the steamer and prepared to make a journey into the eastern *hinterland.*

Samára is a new town, a child of the last century. At the time of my first visit, now thirty years ago, it recalled by its unfinished appearance the new towns of America. Many of the houses were of wood. The streets were still in such a primitive condition that after rain they were almost impassable from mud, and

in dry, gusty weather they generated thick clouds of blinding, suffocating dust. Before I had been many days in the place I witnessed a dust hurricane, during which it was impossible at certain moments to see from my window the houses on the other side of the street. Amidst such primitive surroundings the colossal new church seemed a little out of keeping, and it occurred to my practical British mind that some of the money expended on its construction might have been more profitably employed. But the Russians have their own ideas of the fitness of things. Religious after their own fashion, they subscribe money liberally for ecclesiastical purposes—especially for the building and decoration of their churches. Besides this, the Government considers that every chief town of a province should possess a cathedral.

In its early days Samára was one of the outposts of Russian colonisation, and had often to take precautions against the raids of the nomadic tribes living in the vicinity; but the agricultural frontier has since been pushed far forward to the east and south, and the province was until lately, despite occasional droughts, one of the most productive in the Empire. The town is the chief market of this region, and therein lies its importance. The grain is brought by the peasants from great distances, and stored in large granaries by the merchants, who send it to Moscow or St. Petersburg. In former days this was a very tedious operation. The boats containing the grain were towed by horses or stout peasants up the rivers and through the canals for hundreds of miles. Then came the period of *cabestans*—unwieldy machines propelled by means of anchors and windlasses. Now these primitive methods of transport have disappeared. The grain is either despatched

by rail or put into gigantic barges, which are towed up the river by powerful tug-steamers to some point connected with the great network of railways.

When the traveller has visited the Cathedral and the granaries he has seen all the lions—not very formidable lions, truly—of the place. He may then inspect the kumyss establishments, pleasantly situated near the town. He will find there a considerable number of patients—mostly consumptive—who drink enormous quantities of fermented mares' milk, and who declare that they receive great benefit from this modern health-restorer.

What interested me more than the lions of the town or the suburban kumyss establishments were the offices of the local administration, where I found in the archives much statistical and other information of the kind I was in search of, regarding the economic condition of the province generally, and of the emancipated peasantry in particular. Having filled my note-books with material of this sort, I proceeded to verify and complete it by visiting some characteristic villages and questioning the inhabitants. For the student of Russian affairs who wishes to arrive at real, as distinguished from official, truth, this is not an altogether superfluous operation.

When I had thus made the acquaintance of the sedentary agricultural population in several districts I journeyed eastwards with the intention of visiting the Bashkirs, a Tartar tribe which still preserved—so at least I was assured—its old nomadic habits. My reasons for undertaking this journey were twofold. In the first place I was desirous of seeing with my own eyes some remnants of those terrible nomadic tribes which had at one time conquered Russia and long threatened to over-run Europe—those Tartar hordes which gained, by their irresistible force and

relentless cruelty, the reputation of being "the scourge of God." Besides this, I had long wished to study the conditions of pastoral life, and congratulated myself on having found a convenient opportunity of doing so.

As I proceeded eastwards I noticed a change in the appearance of the villages. The ordinary wooden houses, with their high sloping roofs, gradually gave place to flat-roofed huts, built of a peculiar kind of unburnt bricks, composed of mud and straw. I noticed, too, that the population became less and less dense, and the amount of fallow land proportionately greater. The peasants were evidently richer than those near the Volga, but they complained—as the Russian peasant always does—that they had not land enough. In answer to my inquiries why they did not use the thousands of acres that were lying fallow around them, they explained that they had already raised crops on that land for several successive years, and that consequently they must now allow it to "rest."

In one of the villages through which I passed I met with a very characteristic little incident. The village was called Samovólnaya Ivánofka—that is to say, "Ivánofka the Self-willed" or "the Non-authorised." Whilst our horses were being changed my travelling companion, in the course of conversation with a group of peasants, inquired about the origin of this extraordinary name, and discovered a curious bit of local history. The founders of the village had settled on the land without the permission of the absentee owner, and obstinately resisted all attempts at eviction. Again and again troops had been sent to drive them away, but as soon as the troops retired these "self-willed" people returned and resumed possession, till at last the proprietor, who lived in St. Petersburg or some other distant place, became weary of the contest and

allowed them to remain. The various incidents were related with much circumstantial detail, so that the narration lasted perhaps half an hour. All this time I listened attentively, and when the story was finished I took out my note-book in order to jot down the facts, and asked in what year the affair had happened. No answer was given to my question. The peasants merely looked at each other in a significant way and kept silence. Thinking that my question had not been understood, I asked it a second time, repeating a part of what had been related. To my astonishment and utter discomfiture they all declared that they had never related anything of the sort! In despair I appealed to my friend, and asked him whether my ears had deceived me—whether I was labouring under some strange hallucination. Without giving me any reply he simply smiled and turned away.

When we had left the village and were driving along in our *tarantass* the mystery was satisfactorily cleared up. My friend explained to me that I had not at all misunderstood what had been related, but that my abrupt question and the sight of my note-book had suddenly aroused the peasants' suspicions. "They evidently suspected," he continued, "that you were a *tchinóvnik*, and that you wished to use to their detriment the knowledge you had acquired. They thought it safer, therefore, at once to deny it all. You don't yet understand the Russian muzhik!"

In this last remark I was obliged to concur, but since that time I have come to know the muzhik better, and an incident of the kind would now no longer surprise me. From a long series of observations I have come to the conclusion that the great majority of the Russian peasants, when dealing with the authorities, consider the most patent and barefaced falsehoods as a fair means of self-defence. Thus, for

example, when a muzhik is implicated in a criminal affair, and a preliminary investigation is being made, he probably begins by constructing an elaborate story to explain the facts and exculpate himself. The story may be a tissue of self-evident falsehoods from beginning to end, but he defends it valiantly as long as possible. When he perceives that the position which he has taken up is utterly untenable, he declares openly that all he has said is false, and that he wishes to make a new declaration. This second declaration may have the same fate as the former one, and then he proposes a third. Thus groping his way, he tries various stories till he finds one that seems proof against all objections. In the fact of his thus telling lies there is of course nothing remarkable, for criminals in all parts of the world have a tendency to deviate from the truth when they fall into the hands of justice. The peculiarity is that he retracts his statements with the composed air of a chess-player who requests his opponent to let him take back an inadvertent move. Under the old system of procedure, which was abolished in the Sixties, clever criminals often contrived by means of this simple device to have their trial postponed for many years.

Such incidents naturally astonish a foreigner, and he is apt, in consequence, to pass a very severe judgment on the Russian peasantry in general. The reader may remember Karl Karl'itch's remarks on the subject. These remarks I have heard repeated in various forms by Germans in all parts of the country, and there must be a certain amount of truth in them, for even an eminent Slavophil once publicly admitted that the peasant is prone to perjury.* It is necessary, however, as it seems to me, to draw a distinction. In the ordinary intercourse of peasants among themselves,

* Kiréyefski, in the *Rússkaya Beséda*.

or with people in whom they have confidence, I do not believe that the habit of lying is abnormally developed. It is only when the muzhik comes in contact with the authorities that he shows himself an expert fabricator of falsehoods. In this there is nothing that need surprise us. For ages the peasantry were exposed to the arbitrary power and ruthless exactions of those who were placed over them; and as the law gave them no means of legally protecting themselves, their only means of self-defence lay in cunning and deceit.

We have here, I believe, the true explanation of that "Oriental mendacity" about which Eastern travellers have written so much. It is simply the result of a lawless state of society. Suppose a truth-loving Englishman falls into the hands of brigands or savages. Will he not, if he have merely an ordinary moral character, consider himself justified in inventing a few falsehoods in order to effect his escape? If so, we have no right to condemn very severely the hereditary mendacity of those races which have lived for many generations in a position analogous to that of the supposed Englishman among brigands. When legitimate interests cannot be protected by truthfulness and honesty, prudent people always learn to employ means which experience has proved to be more effectual. In a country where the law does not afford protection, the strong man defends himself by his strength, the weak by cunning and duplicity. This fully explains the fact that in Turkey the Christians are less truthful than the Mahometans.

But we have wandered a long way from the road to Bashkiria. Let us therefore return at once.

Of all the journeys which I made in Russia this was one of the most agreeable. The weather was bright and warm, without being unpleasantly hot; the roads were tolerably smooth; the *tarantass*, which had

been hired for the whole journey, was nearly as comfortable as a *tarantass* can be; good milk, eggs, and white bread could be obtained in abundance; there was not much difficulty in procuring horses in the villages through which we passed, and the owners of them were not very extortionate in their demands. But what most contributed to my comfort was that I was accompanied by an agreeable, intelligent young Russian, who kindly undertook to make all the necessary arrangements, and I was thereby freed from those annoyances and worries which are always encountered in primitive countries where travelling is not yet a recognised institution. To him I left the entire control of our movements, passively acquiescing in everything, and asking no questions as to what was coming. Taking advantage of my passivity, he prepared for me one evening a pleasant little surprise.

About sunset we had left a village called Morsha, and shortly afterwards, feeling drowsy, and being warned by my companion that we should have a long, uninteresting drive, I had lain down in the *tarantass* and gone to sleep. On awaking I found that the *tarantass* had stopped, and that the stars were shining brightly overhead. A big dog was barking furiously close at hand, and I heard the voice of the *yamstchik* informing us that we had arrived. I at once sat up and looked about me, expecting to see a village of some kind, but instead of that I perceived a wide open space, and at a short distance a group of haystacks. Close to the *tarantass* stood two figures in long cloaks, armed with big sticks, and speaking to each other in an unknown tongue. My first idea was that we had been somehow led into a trap, so I drew my revolver in order to be ready for all emergencies. My companion was still snoring loudly by my side, and stoutly resisted all my efforts to awake him.

"What's this?" I said, in a gruff, angry voice, to the *yamstchik*. "Where have you taken us to?"

"To where I was ordered, master!"

For the purpose of getting a more satisfactory explanation I took to shaking my sleepy companion, but before he had returned to consciousness the moon shone out brightly from behind a thick bank of clouds, and cleared up the mystery. The supposed haystacks turned out to be tents. The two figures with long sticks, whom I had suspected of being brigands, were peaceable shepherds, dressed in the ordinary Oriental *khalát*, and tending their sheep, which were grazing close by. Instead of being in an empty hay-field, as I had imagined, we had before us a regular Tartar *aoul*, such as I had often read about. For a moment I felt astonished and bewildered. It seemed to me that I had fallen asleep in Europe and awoke in Asia!

In a few minutes we were comfortably installed in one of the tents, a circular, cupola-shaped erection, of about twelve feet in diameter, composed of a framework of light wooden rods covered with thick felt. It contained no furniture, except a goodly quantity of carpets and pillows, which had been formed into a bed for our accommodation. Our amiable host, who was evidently somewhat astonished at our unexpected visit, but refrained from asking questions, soon bade us good-night and retired. We were not, however, left alone. A large number of black beetles remained and gave us a welcome in their own peculiar fashion. Whether they were provided with wings, or made up for the want of flying appliances by crawling up the sides of the tent and dropping down on any object they wished to reach, I did not discover, but certain it is that they somehow reached our heads—even when we were standing upright—and clung to our hair with wonderful tenacity. Why they should show such a

marked preference for human hair we could not conjecture, till it occurred to us that the natives habitually shaved their heads, and that these beetles must naturally consider a hair-covered cranium a curious novelty deserving of careful examination. Like all children of nature they were decidedly indiscreet and troublesome in their curiosity, but when the light was extinguished they took the hint and departed.

When we awoke next morning it was broad daylight, and we found a crowd of natives in front of the tent. Our arrival was evidently regarded as an important event, and all the inhabitants of the *aoul* were anxious to make our acquaintance. First our host came forward. He was a short, slimly-built man, of middle age, with a grave, severe expression, indicating an unsociable disposition. We afterwards learned that he was an *akhún**—that is to say, a minor officer of the Mahometan ecclesiastical administration, and at the same time a small trader in silken and woollen stuffs. With him came the mullah, or priest, a portly old gentleman with an open, honest face of the European type, and a fine grey beard. The other important members of the little community followed. They were all swarthy in colour, and had the small eyes and prominent cheek-bones which are characteristic of the Tartar races, but they had little of that flatness of countenance and peculiar ugliness which distinguish the pure Mongol. All of them, with the exception of the mullah, spoke a little Russian, and used it to assure us that we were welcome. The children remained respectfully in the background, and the women, with veiled faces, eyed us furtively from the doors of the tents.

* I presume this is the same word as *akhund*, well known on the North-West Frontier of India, where it was applied specially to the late ruler of Svat.

The *aoul* consisted of about twenty tents, all constructed on the same model, and scattered about in sporadic fashion without the least regard to symmetry. Close by was a watercourse, which appears in some maps as a river, under the name of Karalýk, but which was at that time merely a succession of pools containing a dark-coloured liquid. As we more than suspected that these pools supplied the inhabitants with water for culinary purposes, the sight was not calculated to whet our appetites. We turned away therefore hurriedly, and for want of something better to do we watched the preparations for dinner. These were decidedly primitive. A sheep was brought near the door of our tent, and there killed, skinned, cut up into pieces, and put into an immense pot, under which a fire had been kindled.

The dinner itself was not less primitive than the method of preparing it. The table consisted of a large napkin spread in the middle of the tent, and the chairs were represented by cushions, on which we sat cross-legged. There were no plates, knives, forks, spoons, or chopsticks. Guests were expected all to eat out of a common wooden bowl, and to use the instruments with which Nature had provided them. The service was performed by the host and his son. The fare was copious, but not varied — consisting entirely of boiled mutton, without bread or other substitute, and a little salted horse-flesh thrown in as an *entrée*.

To eat out of the same dish with half-a-dozen Mahometans, who accept their Prophet's injunction about ablutions in a highly figurative sense, and who are totally unacquainted with the use of forks and spoons, is not an agreeable operation, even if one is not much troubled with religious prejudices; but with these Bashkirs, something worse than this has to be

encountered, for their favourite method of expressing their esteem and affection for one with whom they are eating consists in putting bits of mutton, and sometimes even handfuls of hashed meat, into his mouth! When I discovered this unexpected peculiarity in Bashkir manners and customs, I almost regretted that I had made a favourable impression upon my new acquaintances.

When the sheep had been devoured, partly by the company in the tent and partly by a nondescript company outside—for the whole *aoul* took part in the festivities — kumyss was served in unlimited quantities. This beverage, as I have already explained, is mare's milk fermented; but what here passed under the name was very different from the kumyss I had tasted in the *établissements* of Samára. There it was a pleasant, effervescing drink, with only the slightest tinge of acidity; here it was a "still" liquid, strongly resembling very thin and very sour butter-milk. My Russian friend made a wry face on first tasting it, and I felt inclined at first to do likewise, but noticing that his grimaces made an unfavourable impression on the audience, I restrained my facial muscles, and looked as if I liked it. Very soon I really came to like it, and learned to "drink fair" with those who had been accustomed to it from their childhood. By this feat I rose considerably in the estimation of the natives; for if one does not drink kumyss one cannot be sociable in the Bashkir sense of the term, and by acquiring the habit one adopts an essential principle of Bashkir nationality. I should certainly have preferred having a cup of it to myself, but I thought it well to conform to the habits of the country, and to accept the big wooden bowl when it was passed round. In return my friends made an important concession in my favour: they

allowed me to smoke as I pleased, though they considered that, as the Prophet had refrained from tobacco, ordinary mortals should do the same.

Whilst the "loving-cup" was going round I distributed some small presents which I had brought for the purpose, and then proceeded to explain the object of my visit. In the distant country from which I came—far away to the westward—I had heard of the Bashkirs as a people possessing many strange customs, but very kind and hospitable to strangers. Of their kindness and hospitality I had already learned something by experience, and I hoped they would allow me to learn something of their mode of life, their customs, their songs, their history, and their religion, in all of which I assured them my distant countrymen took a lively interest.

This little after-dinner speech was perhaps not quite in accordance with Bashkir etiquette, but it made a favourable impression. There was a decided murmur of approbation, and those who understood Russian translated my words to their less accomplished brethren. A short consultation ensued, and then there was a general shout of "Abdullah! Abdullah!" which was taken up and repeated by those standing outside.

In a few minutes Abdullah appeared, with a big, half-picked bone in his hand, and the lower part of his face besmeared with grease. He was a short, thin man, with a dark, sallow complexion, and a look of premature old age; but the suppressed smile that played about his mouth and a tremulous movement of his right eye-lid showed plainly that he had not yet forgotten the fun and frolic of youth. His dress was of richer and more gaudy material, but at the same time more tawdry and tattered, than that of the others. Altogether he looked like an *artiste* in dis-

tressed circumstances, and such he really was. At a word and a sign from the host he laid aside his bone and drew from under his green silk *khalát* a small wind-instrument resembling a flute or flageolet. On this he played a number of native airs. The first melodies which he played reminded me of a Highland pibroch—at one moment low, solemn, and plaintive, then gradually rising into a soul-stirring, martial strain, and again descending to a plaintive wail. The amount of expression which he put into his simple instrument was truly marvellous. Then, passing suddenly from grave to gay, he played a series of light, merry airs, and some of the younger onlookers got up and performed a dance as boisterous and ungraceful as an Irish jig.

This Abdullah turned out to be for me a most valuable acquaintance. He was a kind of Bashkir troubadour, well acquainted not only with the music, but also with the traditions, the history, the superstitions, and the folk-lore of his people. By the *akhún* and the mullah he was regarded as a frivolous, worthless fellow, who had no regular, respectable means of gaining a livelihood, but among the men of less rigid principles he was a general favourite. As he spoke Russian fluently I could converse with him freely without the aid of an interpreter, and he willingly placed his store of knowledge at my disposal. When in the company of the *akhún* he was always solemn and taciturn, but as soon as he was relieved of that dignitary's presence he became lively and communicative.

Another of my new acquaintances was equally useful to me in another way. This was Mehemet Zián, who was not so intelligent as Abdullah, but much more sympathetic. In his open, honest face, and kindly, unaffected manner, there was something so irresistibly

attractive that before I had known him twenty-four hours a sort of friendship had sprung up between us. He was a tall, muscular, broad-shouldered man, with features that suggested a mixture of European blood. Though already past middle age, he was still wiry and active—so active that he could, when on horseback, pick a stone off the ground without dismounting. He could, however, no longer perform this feat at full gallop, as he had been wont to do in his youth. His geographical knowledge was extremely limited and inaccurate—his mind being in this respect like those old Russian maps in which the nations of the earth and a good many peoples who had never more than a mythical existence are jumbled together in hopeless confusion—but his geographical curiosity was insatiable. My travelling-map—the first thing of the kind he had ever seen—interested him deeply. When he found that by simply examining it and glancing at my compass I could tell him the direction and distance of places he knew, his face was like that of a child who sees for the first time a conjuror's performance; and when I explained the trick to him, and taught him to calculate the distance to Bokhara—the sacred city of the Mussulmans of that region—his delight was unbounded. Gradually I perceived that to possess such a map had become the great object of his ambition. Unfortunately I could not at once gratify him as I should have wished, because I had a long journey before me and I had no other map of the region, but I promised to find ways and means of sending him one, and I kept my word by means of a native of the Karalýk district whom I discovered in Samára. I did not add a compass because I could not find one in the town, and it would have been of little use to him because, like a true child of Nature, he always knew the cardinal points by the sun or the stars. Some

years later I had the satisfaction of learning that the map had reached its destination safely, through no less a personage than Count Tolstoy. One evening, at the house of a friend in Moscow, I was presented to the great novelist, and as soon as he heard my name he said, "Oh! I know you already, and I know your friend Mehemet Zián. When I passed a night this summer in his aoul he showed me a map with your signature in the margin, and taught me how to calculate the distance to Bokhara!"

If Mehemet knew little of foreign countries he was thoroughly well acquainted with his own, and repaid me most liberally for my elementary lessons in geography. With him I visited the neighbouring *aouls*. In all of them he had numerous acquaintances, and everywhere we were received with the greatest hospitality, except on one occasion when we paid a visit of ceremony to a famous robber who was the terror of the whole neighbourhood. Certainly he was one of the most brutalised specimens of humanity I have ever encountered. He made no attempt to be amiable, and I felt inclined to leave his tent at once; but I saw that my friend wanted to conciliate him, so I restrained my feelings and eventually established tolerably good relations with him. As a rule I avoided festivities, partly because I knew that my hosts were mostly poor and would not accept payment for the slaughtered sheep, and partly because I had reason to apprehend that they would express to me their esteem and affection *more Bashkirico;* but in kumyss drinking, the ordinary occupation of these people when they have nothing to do, I had to indulge to a most inordinate extent. On these expeditions Abdullah generally accompanied us, and rendered valuable service as interpreter and troubadour. Mehemet could express himself in Russian, but his vocabulary failed him as

soon as the conversation ran above very ordinary topics; Abdullah, on the contrary, was a first-rate interpreter, and under the influence of his musical pipe and lively talkativeness new acquaintances became sociable and communicative. Poor Abdullah! He was a kind of universal genius; but his faded, tattered *khalát* showed only too plainly that in Bashkiria, as in more civilised countries, universal genius and the artistic temperament lead to poverty rather than wealth.

I have no intention of troubling the reader with the miscellaneous facts which, with the assistance of these two friends, I succeeded in collecting—indeed, I could not if I would, for the notes I then made were afterwards lost—but I wish to say a few words about the actual economic condition of the Bashkirs. They are at present passing from pastoral to agricultural life; and it is not a little interesting to note the causes which induce them to make this change, and the way in which it is made.

Philosophers have long held a theory of social development according to which men were at first hunters, then shepherds, and lastly agriculturists. How far this theory is in accordance with reality we need not for the present inquire, but we may examine an important part of it and ask ourselves the question, Why did pastoral tribes adopt agriculture? The common explanation is that they changed their mode of life in consequence of some ill-defined, fortuitous circumstances. A great legislator arose amongst them and taught them to till the soil, or they came in contact with an agricultural race and adopted the customs of their neighbours. Such explanations must appear unsatisfactory to anyone who has lived with a pastoral people. Pastoral life is so incomparably more agreeable than the hard lot of the agriculturist, and so

much more in accordance with the natural indolence of human nature, that no great legislator, though he had the wisdom of a Solon and the eloquence of a Demosthenes, could possibly induce his fellow-countrymen to pass voluntarily from the one to the other. Of all the ordinary means of gaining a livelihood—with the exception perhaps of mining—agriculture is the most laborious, and is never voluntarily adopted by men who have not been accustomed to it from their childhood. The life of a pastoral race, on the contrary, is a perennial holiday, and I can imagine nothing except the prospect of starvation which could induce men who live by their flocks and herds to make the transition to agricultural life.

The prospect of starvation is, in fact, the cause of the transition—probably in all cases, and certainly in the case of the Bashkirs. So long as they had abundance of pasturage they never thought of tilling the soil. Their flocks and herds supplied them with all that they required, and enabled them to lead a tranquil, indolent existence. No great legislator arose among them to teach them the use of the plough and the sickle, and when they saw the Russian peasants on their borders laboriously ploughing and reaping, they looked on them with compassion, and never thought of following their example. But an impersonal legislator came to them—a very severe and tyrannical legislator, who would not brook disobedience—I mean Economic Necessity. By the encroachments of the Ural Cossacks on the east, and by the ever-advancing wave of Russian colonisation from the north and west, their territory had been greatly diminished. With diminution of the pasturage came diminution of the live stock, their sole means of subsistence. In spite of their passively conservative spirit they had to look about for some new

means of obtaining food and clothing—some new mode of life requiring less extensive territorial possessions. It was only then that they began to think of imitating their neighbours. They saw that the neighbouring Russian peasant lived comfortably on thirty or forty acres of land, whilst they possessed a hundred and fifty acres per male, and were in danger of starvation.

The conclusion to be drawn from this was self-evident—they ought at once to begin ploughing and sowing. But there was a very serious obstacle to the putting of this principle in practice. Agriculture certainly requires less land than sheep-farming, but it requires very much more labour, and to hard work the Bashkirs were not accustomed. They could bear hardships and fatigues in the shape of long journeys on horseback, but the severe, monotonous labour of the plough and the sickle was not to their taste. At first, therefore, they adopted a compromise. They had a portion of their land tilled by Russian peasants, and ceded to these a part of the produce in return for the labour expended; in other words, they assumed the position of landed proprietors, and farmed part of their land on the *métayage* system.

The process of transition had reached this point in several *aouls* which I visited. My friend Mehemet Zián showed me at some distance from the tents his plot of arable land, and introduced me to the peasant who tilled it—a Little Russian, who assured me that the arrangement satisfied all parties. The process of transition cannot, however, stop here. The compromise is merely a temporary expedient. Virgin soil gives very abundant harvests, sufficient to support both the labourer and the indolent proprietor, but after a few years the soil becomes exhausted and gives only a very moderate revenue. A proprietor,

therefore, must sooner or later dispense with the labourers, who take half of the produce as their recompense, and must himself put his hand to the plough.

Thus we see the Bashkirs are, properly speaking, no longer a purely pastoral, nomadic people. The discovery of this fact caused me some little disappointment, and in the hope of finding a tribe in a more primitive condition I visited the Kirghiz of the Inner Horde, who occupy the country to the southward, in the direction of the Caspian. Here for the first time I saw the genuine Steppe in the full sense of the term—a country level as the sea, with not a hillock or even a gentle undulation to break the straight line of the horizon, and not a patch of cultivation, a tree, a bush, or even a stone, to diversify the monotonous expanse.

Traversing such a region is, I need scarcely say, very weary work—all the more as there are no milestones or other landmarks to show the progress you are making. Still, it is not so overwhelmingly wearisome as might be supposed. In the morning you may watch the vast lakes, with their rugged promontories and well-wooded banks, which the mirage creates for your amusement. Then during the course of the day there are always one or two trifling incidents which arouse you for a little from your somnolence. Now you descry a couple of horsemen on the distant horizon, and watch them as they approach; and when they come alongside you may have a talk with them if you know the language or have an interpreter; or you may amuse yourself with a little pantomime, if articulate speech is impossible. Now you encounter a long train of camels marching along with solemn, stately step, and speculate as to the contents of the big packages with which

they are laden. Now you encounter the carcase of a horse that has fallen by the wayside, and watch the dogs and the steppe eagles fighting over their prey; and if you are murderously inclined you may take a shot with your revolver at these great birds, for they are ignorantly brave, and will sometimes allow you to approach within twenty or thirty yards. At last you perceive—most pleasant sight of all—a group of hay-stack shaped tents in the distance; and you hurry on to enjoy the grateful shade, and quench your thirst with "deep, deep draughts" of refreshing kumyss.

During my journey through the Kirghiz country I was accompanied by a Russian gentleman, who had provided himself with a circular letter from the hereditary chieftain of the Horde, a personage who rejoiced in the imposing name of Genghis Khan,* and claimed to be a descendant of the great Mongol conqueror. This document assured us a good reception in the *aouls* through which we passed. Every Kirghis who saw it treated it with profound respect, and professed to put all his goods and chattels at our service. But in spite of this powerful recommendation we met with none of that friendly cordiality and communicativeness which I had found among the Bashkirs. A tent with an unlimited quantity of cushions was always set apart for our accommodation; the sheep were killed and boiled for our dinner, and the pails of kumyss were regularly brought for our refreshment; but all this was evidently done as a matter of duty and not as a spontaneous expression of hospitality. When we determined once or twice to prolong our visit beyond the term originally announced, I could perceive that our host was not at all delighted

* I have adopted the ordinary English spelling of this name. The Kirghiz and the Russians pronounce it "Tchinghiz."

by the change of our plans. The only consolation we had was that those who entertained us made no scruples about accepting payment for the food and shelter supplied.

From all this I have no intention of drawing the conclusion that the Kirghiz are, as a people, inhospitable or unfriendly to strangers. My experience of them is too limited to warrant any such inference. The letter of Genghis Khan insured us all the accommodation we required, but it at the same time gave us a certain official character not at all favourable to the establishment of friendly relations. Those with whom we came in contact regarded us as Russian officials, and suspected us of having some secret designs. As I endeavoured to discover the number of their cattle, and to form an approximate estimate of their annual revenue, they naturally feared—having no conception of disinterested scientific curiosity—that these data were being collected for the purpose of increasing the taxes, or with some similar intention of a sinister kind. Very soon I perceived clearly that any information we might here collect regarding the economic conditions of pastoral life would not be of much value, and I postponed my proposed studies to a more convenient season.

The Kirghiz are, ethnographically speaking, closely allied to the Bashkirs, but differ from them both in physiognomy and language. Their features approach much nearer to the pure Mongol type, and their language is a distinct dialect, which a Bashkir or a Tartar of Kazán has some difficulty in understanding. They are professedly Mahometans, but their Mahometanism is not of a rigid kind, as may be seen by the fact that their women do not veil their faces even in the presence of Ghiaours—a laxness of which the Ghiaour will certainly not approve if he happen to

be sensitive to female beauty and ugliness. Their mode of life differs little from that of the Bashkirs, but they have proportionately more land and are consequently still able to lead a purely pastoral life. Near their western frontier, it is true, they annually let patches of land to the Russian peasants for the purpose of raising crops; but these encroachments can never advance very far, for the greater part of their territory is unsuited to agriculture, on account of a large admixture of salt in the soil. This fact will have an important influence on their future. Unlike the Bashkirs, who possess good arable land, and are consequently on the road to become agriculturists, they will in all probability continue to live exclusively by their flocks and herds.

To the south-west of the Lower Volga, in the flat region lying to the north of the Caucasus, we find another pastoral tribe, the Kalmyks, differing widely from the two former in language, in physiognomy, and in religion. Their language, a dialect of the Mongolian, has no close affinity with any other language in this part of the world. In respect of religion they are likewise isolated, for they are Buddhists, and have consequently no co-religionists nearer than Mongolia or Tibet. But it is their physiognomy that most strikingly distinguishes them from the surrounding peoples, and stamps them as Mongols of the purest water. There is something almost infra-human in their ugliness. They show in an exaggerated degree all those repulsive traits which we see toned down and refined in the face of an average Chinaman; and it is difficult, when we meet them for the first time, to believe that a human soul lurks behind their expressionless, flattened faces and small, dull, obliquely set eyes. If the Tartar and Turkish races are really descended from ancestors of that type, then we must

assume that they have received in the course of time a large admixture of Aryan or Semitic blood.

But we must not be too hard on the poor Kalmyks, or judge of their character by their unprepossessing appearance. They are by no means so unhuman as they look. Men who have lived among them have assured me that they are decidedly intelligent, especially in all matters relating to cattle, and that they are—though somewhat addicted to cattle-lifting and other primitive customs not tolerated in the more advanced stages of civilisation—by no means wanting in some of the better qualities of human nature.

Formerly there was a fourth pastoral tribe in this region—the Nogaï Tartars. They occupied the plains to the north of the Sea of Azof, but they are no longer to be found there. Shortly after the Crimean War they emigrated to Turkey, and their lands are now occupied by Russian, German, Bulgarian, and Montenegrin colonists.

Among the pastoral tribes of this region the Kalmyks are recent intruders. They first appeared in the seventeenth century, and were long formidable on account of their great numbers and compact organisation; but in 1771 the majority of them suddenly struck their tents and retreated to their old home in the north of the Celestial Empire. Those who remained were easily pacified, and have long since lost, under the influence of unbroken peace and a strong Russian administration, their old warlike spirit. Their latest military exploits were performed during the last years of the Napoleonic wars, and were not of a very serious kind; a troop of them accompanied the Russian army, and astonished Western Europe by their uncouth features, their strange costume, and their primitive accoutrements, among which their curious bows and arrows figured conspicuously.

The other pastoral tribes which I have mentioned —Bashkirs, Kirghiz, and Nogaï Tartars—are the last remnants of the famous marauders who from time immemorial down to a comparatively recent period held the vast plains of Southern Russia. The long struggle between them and the agricultural colonists from the north-west—closely resembling the long struggle between the Redskins and the white settlers on the prairies of North America—forms an important page of Russian history.

For centuries the warlike nomads stoutly resisted all encroachments on their pasture-grounds, and considered cattle-lifting, kidnapping, and pillage as a legitimate and honourable occupation. "Their raids," says an old Byzantine writer, "are as flashes of lightning, and their retreat is at once heavy and light—heavy from booty and light from the swiftness of their movements. For them a peaceful life is a misfortune, and a convenient opportunity for war is the height of felicity. Worst of all, they are more numerous than bees in spring; their numbers are uncountable." "Having no fixed place of abode," says another Byzantine authority, "they seek to conquer all lands and colonise none. They are flying people, and therefore cannot be caught. As they have neither towns nor villages, they must be hunted like wild beasts, and can be fitly compared only to griffins, which beneficent Nature has banished to uninhabited regions." As a Persian distich, quoted by Vambéry, has it—

> "They came, conquered, burned,
> Pillaged, murdered, and went."

Their raids are thus described by an old Russian chronicler:—"They burn the villages, the farmyards, and the churches. The land is turned by them into

a desert, and the overgrown fields become the lair of wild beasts. Many people are led away into slavery; others are tortured and killed, or die from hunger and thirst. Sad, weary, stiff from cold, with faces wan from woe, barefoot or naked, and torn by the thistles, the Russian prisoners trudge along through an unknown country, and, weeping, say to one another, 'I am from such a town, and I from such a village.'" And in harmony with the monastic chroniclers we hear the nameless Slavonic Ossian wailing for the fallen sons of Rūs:—"In the Russian land is rarely heard the voice of the husbandman, but often the cry of the vultures, fighting with each other over the bodies of the slain; and the ravens scream as they fly to the spoil."

In spite of the stubborn resistance of the nomads, the wave of colonisation moved steadily onwards until the first years of the thirteenth century, when it was suddenly checked and thrown back. A great Mongolian horde from Eastern Asia, far more numerous and better organised than the local nomadic tribes, overran the whole country, and for more than two centuries Russia was in a certain sense ruled by Mongol Khans. As I wish to speak at some length of this Mongol domination, I shall devote to it a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MONGOL DOMINATION.

The Conquest—Genghis Khan and his People—Creation and Rapid Disintegration of the Mongol Empire—The Golden Horde—The Real Character of the Mongol Domination—Religious Toleration—Mongol System of Government—Grand Princes—The Princes of Moscow—Influence of the Mongol Domination—Practical Importance of the Subject.

THE Tartar invasion, with its direct and indirect consequences, is a subject which has more than a mere antiquarian interest. To the influence of the Mongols are commonly attributed many peculiarities in the actual condition and national character of the Russians of the present day, and some writers would even have us believe that the men whom we call Russians are simply Tartars half disguised by a thin varnish of European civilisation. It may be well, therefore, to inquire what the Tartar or Mongol domination really was, and how far it affected the historical development and national character of the Russian people.

The story of the conquest may be briefly told. In 1224 the chieftains of the Poloftsi—one of those pastoral tribes which roamed on the Steppe and habitually carried on a predatory warfare with the Russians of the south—sent deputies to Mistislaf the Brave, Prince of Galicia, to inform him that their country had been invaded from the south-east by strong, cruel enemies called Tartars*—strange-looking men with brown faces, eyes small and wide apart, thick lips, broad shoulders, and black hair. "To-day," said the deputies, "they have seized our

* The word is properly "Tatar," and the Russians write and pronounce it in this way, but I have preferred to retain the better known form.

country, and to-morrow they will seize yours if you do not help us."

Mistislaf had probably no objection to the Poloftsi being annihilated by some tribe stronger and fiercer than themselves, for they gave him a great deal of trouble by their frequent raids; but he perceived the force of the argument about his own turn coming next, and thought it wise to assist his usually hostile neighbours. For the purpose of warding off the danger he called together the neighbouring Princes, and urged them to join him in an expedition against the new enemy. The expedition was undertaken, and ended in disaster. On the Kalka, a small river falling into the Sea of Azof, the Russian host met the invaders, and was completely routed. The country was thereby opened to the victors, but they did not follow up their advantage. After advancing for some distance they suddenly wheeled round and disappeared.

Thus ended unexpectedly the first visit of these unwelcome strangers. Thirteen years afterwards they returned, and were not so easily got rid of. An enormous horde crossed the River Ural, and advanced into the heart of the country, pillaging, burning, devastating, and murdering. Nowhere did they meet with serious resistance. The Princes made no attempt to combine against the common enemy. Nearly all the principal towns were laid in ashes, and the inhabitants were killed or carried off as slaves. Having conquered Russia, they advanced westward, and threw all Europe into alarm. The panic reached even England, and interrupted, it is said, for a time the herring fishing on the coast. Western Europe, however, escaped their ravages. After visiting Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Servia, and Dalmatia, they retreated to the Lower Volga, and the Russian

Princes were summoned thither to do homage to the victorious Khan.

At first the Russians had only very vague notions as to who this terrible enemy was. The old chronicler remarks briefly:—"For our sins unknown peoples have appeared. No one knows who they are or whence they have come, or to what race and faith they belong. They are commonly called Tartars, but some call them Tauermen, and others Petchenegs. Who they really are is known only to God, and perhaps to wise men deeply read in books." Some of these "wise men deeply read in books" supposed them to be the idolatrous Moabites who had in Old Testament times harassed God's chosen people, whilst others thought that they must be the descendants of the men whom Gideon had driven out, of whom a revered saint had prophesied that they would come in the latter days and conquer the whole earth, from the East even unto the Euphrates, and from the Tigris even unto the Black Sea.

We are now happily in a position to dispense with such vague ethnographical speculations. From the accounts of several European travellers who visited Tartary about that time, and from the writings of various Oriental historians, we know a great deal about these barbarians who conquered Russia and frightened the Western nations.

The vast region lying to the east of Russia, from the basin of the Volga to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, was inhabited then, as it is still, by numerous Tartar and Mongol tribes. These two terms are often regarded as identical and interchangeable, but they ought, I think, to be distinguished. From the ethnographic, the linguistic, and the religious point of view they differ widely from each other. The Kazan Tartars, the Bashkirs, the Kirghiz, in a word, all the

tribes in the country stretching latitudinally from the Volga to Kashgar, and longitudinally from the Persian frontier, the Hindu Kush and the Northern Himalaya, to a line drawn east and west through the middle of Siberia, belong to the Tartar group; whereas those further eastward, occupying Mongolia and Manchuria, are Mongol in the stricter sense of the term.

A very little experience enables the traveller to distinguish between the two. Both of them have the well-known characteristics of the Northern Asiatic —the broad flat face, yellow skin, small, obliquely set eyes, high cheek-bones, thin, straggling beard; but these traits are more strongly marked, more exaggerated, if we may use such an expression, in the Mongol than in the Tartar. Thus the Mongol is, according to our conceptions, by far the uglier of the two, and the man of Tartar race, when seen beside him, appears almost European by comparison. The distinction is confirmed by a study of their languages. All the Tartar languages are closely allied, so that a person of average linguistic talent who has mastered one of them, whether it be the rude Turki of Central Asia or the highly polished Turkish of Stambul, can easily acquire any of the others; whereas even an extensive acquaintance with Tartar dialects will be of no practical use to him in learning a language of the Mongol group. In their religions likewise the two races differ. The Mongols are as a rule Shamanists or Buddhists, while the Tartars are Mahometans. Some of the Mongol invaders, it is true, adopted Mahometanism from the conquered Tartar tribes, and by this change of religion, which led naturally to inter-marriage, their descendants became gradually blended with the older population; but the broad line of distinction was not permanently effaced.

It is often supposed, even by people who profess to be acquainted with Russian history, that Mongols and Tartars alike first came westward to the frontiers of Europe with Genghis Khan. This is true of the Mongols, but so far as the Tartars are concerned it is an entire mistake. From time immemorial, the Tartar tribes roamed over these territories. Like the Russians, they were conquered by the Mongol invaders and had long to pay tribute, and when the Mongol Empire crumbled to pieces by internal dissensions and finally disappeared before the victorious advance of the Russians, the Tartars reappeared from the confusion without having lost, notwithstanding an intermixture doubtless of Mongol blood, their old racial characteristics, their old dialects, and their old tribal organisation.

The germ of the vast horde which swept over Asia and advanced into the centre of Europe was a small pastoral tribe of Mongols living in the hilly country to the north of China, near the sources of the Amur. This tribe was neither more warlike nor more formidable than its neighbours till near the close of the twelfth century, when there appeared in it a man who is described as "a mighty hunter before the Lord." Of him and his people we have a brief description by a Chinese author of the time:—"A man of gigantic stature, with broad forehead and long beard, and remarkable for his bravery. As to his people, their faces are broad, flat, and four-cornered, with prominent cheek-bones; their eyes have no upper eyelashes; they have very little hair in their beards and moustaches; their exterior is very repulsive." This man of gigantic stature was no other than Genghis Khan. He began by subduing and incorporating into his army the surrounding tribes, conquered with their assistance a great part of

Northern China, and then, leaving one of his generals to complete the conquest of the Celestial Empire, he led his army westward with the ambitious design of conquering the whole world. "As there is but one God in heaven," he was wont to say, "so there should be but one ruler on earth"; and this one universal ruler he himself aspired to be.

A European army necessarily diminishes in force and its existence becomes more and more imperilled as it advances from its base of operations into a foreign and hostile country. Not so a horde like that of Genghis Khan in a country such as that which it had to traverse. It needed no base of operations, for it took with it its flocks, its tents, and all its worldly goods. Properly speaking, it was not an army at all, but rather a people in movement. The grassy Steppes fed the flocks, and the flocks fed the warriors; and with such a simple commissariat system there was no necessity for keeping up communications with the point of departure. Instead of diminishing in numbers, the horde constantly increased as it moved forwards. The nomadic tribes which it encountered on its way, composed of men who found a home wherever they found pasture and drinking water, required little persuasion to make them join the onward movement. By means of this terrible instrument of conquest Genghis succeeded in creating a colossal Empire, stretching from the Carpathians to the eastern shores of Asia, and from the Arctic Ocean to the Himalayas.

Genghis was no mere ruthless destroyer; he was at the same time one of the greatest administrators the world has ever seen. But his administrative genius could not work miracles. His vast Empire, founded on conquest and composed of the most heterogeneous elements, had no principle of organic

life in it, and could not possibly be long-lived. It had been created by him, and it perished with him. For some time after his death the dignity of Grand Khan was held by some one of his descendants, and the centralised administration was nominally preserved; but the local rulers rapidly emancipated themselves from the central authority, and within half a century after the death of its founder the great Mongol Empire was little more than "a geographical expression."

With the dismemberment of the short-lived Empire the danger for Eastern Europe was by no means at an end. The independent hordes were scarcely less formidable than the Empire itself. A grandson of Genghis formed on the Russian frontier a new State, commonly known as Kiptchak, or the Golden Horde, and built a capital called Seraï, on one of the arms of the Lower Volga. This capital, which has since so completely disappeared that there is some doubt as to its site, is described by Ibn Batuta, who visited it in the fifteenth century, as a very great, populous, and beautiful city, possessing many mosques, fine market places, and broad streets, in which were to be seen merchants from Babylon, Egypt, Syria, and other countries. Here lived the Khans of the Golden Horde, who kept Russia in subjection for two centuries.

In conquering Russia the Mongols had no wish to possess themselves of the soil, or to take into their own hands the local administration. What they wanted was not land, of which they had enough and to spare, but movable property which they might enjoy without giving up their pastoral, nomadic life. They applied, therefore, to Russia the same method of extracting supplies as they had used in other countries. As soon as their authority had been formally acknowledged they sent officials into the country to number the

inhabitants and to collect an amount of tribute proportionate to the population. This was a severe burden for the people, not only on account of the sum demanded, but also on account of the manner in which it was raised. The exactions and cruelty of the tax-gatherers led to local insurrections, and the insurrections were of course always severely punished. But there was never any general military occupation of the country or any wholesale confiscations of land, and the existing political organisation was left undisturbed. The modern method of dealing with annexed provinces was totally unknown to the Mongols. The Khans never thought of attempting to denationalise their Russian subjects. They demanded simply an oath of allegiance from the Princes,* and a certain sum of tribute from the people. The vanquished were allowed to retain their land, their religion, their language, their courts of justice, and all their other institutions.

The nature of the Mongol domination is well illustrated by the policy which the conquerors adopted towards the Russian Church. For more than half a century after the conquest the religion of the Tartars was a mixture of Buddhism and Paganism, with traces of Sabæism or fire-worship. During this period Christianity was more than simply tolerated. The Grand Khan Kuyuk caused a Christian chapel to be erected near his domicile, and one of his successors, Khubilaï, was in the habit of publicly taking part in the Easter festivals. In 1261 the Khan of the Golden Horde allowed the Russians to found a bishopric in his capital, and several members of his family adopted Christianity. One of them even founded a monastery, and became a saint of the Russian Church! The

* During the Mongol domination Russia was composed of a large number of independent principalities.

Orthodox clergy were exempted from the poll-tax, and in the charters granted to them it was expressly declared that if anyone committed blasphemy against the faith of the Russians he should be put to death. Some time afterwards the Golden Horde was converted to Islam, but the Khans did not on that account change their policy. They continued to favour the clergy, and their protection was long remembered. Many generations later, when the property of the Church was threatened by the autocratic power, refractory ecclesiastics contrasted the policy of the Orthodox Sovereign with that of the "godless Tartars," much to the advantage of the latter.

At first there was and could be very little mutual confidence between the conquerors and the conquered. The Princes anxiously looked for an opportunity of throwing off the galling yoke, and the people chafed under the exactions and cruelty of the tribute collectors, whilst the Khans took precautions to prevent insurrection, and threatened to devastate the country if their authority was not respected. But in the course of time this mutual distrust and hostility greatly lessened. When the Princes found by experience that all attempts at resistance were fruitless, they became reconciled to their new position, and instead of seeking to throw off the Khan's authority, they tried to gain his favour, in the hope of forwarding their personal interests. For this purpose they paid frequent visits to the Tartar Suzerain, made rich presents to his wives and courtiers, received from him charters confirming their authority, and sometimes even married members of his family. Some of them used the favour thus acquired for extending their possessions at the expense of neighbouring Princes of their own race, and did not hesitate to call in Tartar hordes to their assistance. The Khans, in their turn, placed greater

confidence in their vassals, entrusted them with the task of collecting the tribute, recalled their own officials who were a constant eyesore to the people, and abstained from all interference in the internal affairs of the principalities so long as the tribute was regularly paid. The Princes acted, in short, as the Khan's lieutenants, and became to a certain extent Tartarised. Some of them carried this policy so far that they were reproached by the people with "loving beyond measure the Tartars and their language, and with giving them too freely land, and gold, and goods of every kind."

Had the Khans of the Golden Horde been prudent, far-seeing statesmen, they might have long retained their supremacy over Russia. In reality they showed themselves miserably deficient in political talent. Seeking merely to extract from the country as much tribute as possible, they overlooked all higher considerations, and by this culpable short-sightedness prepared their own political ruin. Instead of keeping all the Russian Princes on the same level and thereby rendering them all equally feeble, they were constantly bribed or cajoled into giving to one or more of their vassals a pre-eminence over the others. At first this pre-eminence consisted in little more than the empty title of Grand Prince; but the vassals thus favoured soon transformed the barren distinction into a genuine power by arrogating to themselves the exclusive right of holding direct communications with the Horde, and compelling the minor Princes to deliver to them the Mongol tribute. If any of the lesser Princes refused to acknowledge this intermediate authority, the Grand Prince could easily crush them by representing them at the Horde as rebels. Such an accusation would cause the accused to be summoned before the Supreme Tribunal, where the procedure

was extremely summary, and the Grand Prince had always the means of obtaining a decision in his own favour.

Of the Princes who strove in this way to increase their influence, the most successful were the Grand Princes of Moscow. They were not a chivalrous race, or one with which the severe moralist can sympathise, but they were largely endowed with cunning, tact, and perseverance, and were little hampered by conscientious scruples. Having early discovered that the liberal distribution of money at the Tartar court was the surest means of gaining favour, they lived parsimoniously at home and spent their savings at the Horde. To secure the continuance of the favour thus acquired, they were ready to form matrimonial alliances with the Khan's family, and to act zealously as his lieutenants. When Novgorod, the haughty, turbulent Republic, refused to pay the yearly tribute, they quelled the insurrection and punished the leaders; and when the inhabitants of Tver rose against the Tartars and compelled their Prince to make common cause with them, the wily Muscovite hastened to the Tartar court and received from the Khan the revolted principality, with 50,000 Tartars to support his authority.

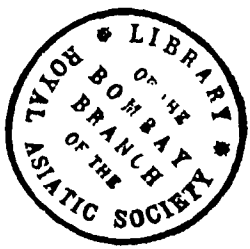
Thus those cunning Moscow Princes "loved the Tartars beyond measure" so long as the Khan was irresistibly powerful, but as his power waned they stood forth as his rivals. When the Golden Horde, like the great Empire of which it had once formed a part, fell to pieces in the fifteenth century, these ambitious Princes read the signs of the times, and put themselves at the head of the liberation movement, which was at first unsuccessful, but ultimately freed the country from the hated yoke.

From this brief sketch of the Mongol domination

the reader will readily understand that it did not leave any deep, lasting impression on the people. The invaders never settled in Russia Proper, and never amalgamated with the native population. So long as they retained their semi-pagan, semi-Buddhistic religion, a certain number of their notables became Christians and were absorbed by the Russian Noblesse; but as soon as the Horde adopted Islam, this movement was arrested. There was no blending of the two races such as has taken place—and is still taking place—between the Russian peasantry and the Finnish tribes of the North. The Russians remained Christians, and the Tartars remained Mahometans; and this difference of religion raised an impassable barrier between the two nationalities.

It must, however, be admitted that the Tartar domination, though it had little influence on the life and habits of the people, had a considerable influence on the political development of the nation. At the time of the conquest Russia was composed of a large number of independent principalities, all governed by descendants of Rurik. As these principalities were not geographical or ethnographical units, but mere artificial, arbitrarily defined districts, which were regularly subdivided or combined according to the hereditary rights of the Princes, it is highly probable that they would in any case have been sooner or later united under one sceptre; but it is quite certain that the policy of the Khans helped to accelerate this unification and to create the autocratic power which has since been wielded by the Tsars. If the principalities had been united without foreign interference, we should probably have found in the united State some form of political organisation corresponding to that which existed in the component parts—some mixed form of government, in which the political

power would have been more or less equally divided between the Tsar and the people. The Tartar rule interrupted this normal development by extinguishing all free political life. The first Tsars of Muscovy were the political descendants, not of the old independent Princes, but of the Mongol Khans. It may be said, therefore, that the autocratic power, which has been during the last four centuries out of all comparison the most important factor in Russian history, was in a certain sense created by the Mongol domination.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CHAPTER XV.

THE COSSACKS.

Lawlessness on the Steppe—Slave-markets of the Crimea—The Military Cordon and the Free Cossacks—The Zaporovian Commonwealth compared with Sparta and with the Mediæval Military Orders—The Cossacks of the Don, of the Volga, and of the Ural—Border Warfare—The Modern Cossacks—Land Tenure among the Cossacks of the Don—The Transition from Pastoral to Agricultural Life—"Universal Law" of Social Development—Communal *versus* Private Property—Flogging as a means of Land-registration.

No sooner had the Grand Princes of Moscow thrown off the Mongol yoke and become independent Tsars of Muscovy than they began that eastward territorial expansion which has been going on steadily ever since, and which culminated in the occupation of Talienwan and Port Arthur. Ivan the Terrible conquered the Khanates of Kazán and Astrakhan (1552-54) and reduced to nominal subjection the Bashkir and Kirghiz tribes in the vicinity of the Volga, but he did not thereby establish law and order on the Steppe. The lawless tribes retained their old pastoral mode of life and predatory habits, and harassed the Russian agricultural population of the outlying provinces in the same way as the Red Indians in America used to harass the white colonists of the Far West. A large section of the Horde, inhabiting the Crimea and the Steppe to the north of the Black Sea, escaped annexation by submitting to the Ottoman Turks and becoming tributaries of the Sultan.

The Turks were at that time a formidable power, with which the Tsars of Muscovy were too weak to cope successfully, and the Khan of the Crimea could always, when hard pressed by his

northern neighbours, obtain assistance from Constantinople. This potentate exercised a nominal authority over the pastoral tribes which roamed on the Steppe between the Crimea and the Russian frontier, but he had neither the power nor the desire to control their aggressive tendencies. Their raids in Russian and Polish territory ensured, among other advantages, a regular and plentiful supply of slaves, which formed the chief article of export from Kaffa—the modern Theodosia — and from the other seaports of the coast.

Of this slave trade, which flourished down to 1783, when the Crimea was finally conquered and annexed by Russia, we have a graphic account by an eye-witness, a Lithuanian traveller of the sixteenth century. "Ships from Asia," he says, "bring arms, clothes, and horses to the Crimean Tartars, and start on the homeward voyage laden with slaves. It is for this kind of merchandise alone that the Crimean markets are remarkable. Slaves may be always had for sale as a pledge or as a present, and everyone rich enough to have a horse deals in them. If a man wishes to buy clothes, arms, or horses, and does not happen to have at the moment any slaves, he takes on credit the articles required, and makes a formal promise to deliver at a given term a certain number of people of our blood—being convinced that he can get by that time the requisite number. And these promises are always accurately fulfilled, as if those who made them had always a supply of our people in their courtyards. A Jewish money-changer, sitting at the gate of Tauris and seeing constantly the countless multitude of our countrymen led in as captives, asked us whether there still remained any people in our land, and whence came such a multitude of them. The stronger of these captives, branded on the fore-

head and the cheeks and manacled or fettered, are tortured by severe labour all day, and are shut up in dark cells at night. They are kept alive by small quantities of food, composed chiefly of the flesh of animals that have died—putrid, covered with maggots, disgusting even to dogs. Women, who are more tender, are treated in a different fashion; some of them who can sing and play are employed to amuse the guests at festivals.

"When the slaves are led out for sale they walk to the market-place in single file, like storks on the wing, in whole dozens, chained together by the neck, and are there sold by auction. The auctioneer shouts loudly that they are 'the newest arrivals, simple, and not cunning, lately captured from the people of the kingdom (Poland), and not from Muscovy'; for the Muscovite race, being crafty and deceitful, does not bring a good price. This kind of merchandise is appraised with great accuracy in the Crimea, and is bought by foreign merchants at a high price, in order to be sold at a still higher rate to blacker nations, such as Saracens, Persians, Indians, Arabs, Syrians, and Assyrians. When a purchase is made the teeth are examined, to see that they are neither few nor discoloured. At the same time the more hidden parts of the body are carefully inspected, and if a mole, excrescence, wound, or other latent defect is discovered, the bargain is rescinded. But notwithstanding these investigations the cunning slave-dealers and brokers succeed in cheating the buyers; for when they have valuable boys and girls, they do not at once produce them, but first fatten them, clothe them in silk, and put powder and rouge on their cheeks, so as to sell them at a better price. Sometimes beautiful and perfect maidens of our nation bring their weight in gold. This takes place

in all the towns of the peninsula, but especially in Kaffa." *

To protect the agricultural population of the Steppe against the raids of these thieving, cattle-lifting, kidnapping neighbours, the Tsars of Muscovy and the Kings of Poland built forts, constructed palisades, dug trenches, and kept up a regular military cordon. The troops composing this cordon were called Cossacks; but these were not the "Free Cossacks" best known to history and romance. These latter lived beyond the frontier on the debatable land which lay between the two hostile races, and there they formed self-governing military communities. Each one of the rivers flowing southwards—the Dnieper, the Don, the Volga, and the Yaïk or Ural—was held by a community of these Free Cossacks, and no one, whether Christian or Tartar, was allowed to pass through their territory without their permission.

Officially the Free Cossacks were Russians, for they professed to be champions of Orthodox Christianity, and—with the exception of those of the Dnieper—loyal subjects of the Tsar, but in reality they were something different. Though they were Russian by origin, language, and sympathy, the habit of kidnapping Tartar women introduced among them a certain admixture of Tartar blood. Though self-constituted champions of Christianity and haters of Islam, they troubled themselves very little with religion, and did not submit to the ecclesiastical authorities. As to their political status, it cannot be easily defined. Whilst professing allegiance and devotion to the Tsar, they did not think it necessary to obey him,

* Michalonis Litvani, "De moribus Tartarorum Fragmina," X., Basiliæ, 1615.

except in so far as his orders suited their own convenience. And the Tsar, it must be confessed, acted towards them in a similar fashion. When he found it convenient he called them his faithful subjects; and when complaints were made to him about their raids on Turkish territory, he declared that they were not his subjects, but runaways and brigands, and that the Sultan might punish them as he thought fit. At the same time, the so-called runaways and brigands regularly received supplies and ammunition from Moscow, as is amply proved by recently-published documents. Down to the middle of the seventeenth century the Cossacks of the Dnieper stood in a similar relation to the Polish kings; but at that time they threw off their allegiance to Poland, and became subjects of the Tsars of Muscovy.

Of these semi-independent military communities, which formed a continuous barrier along the southern and south-eastern frontier, the most celebrated were the Zaporovians * of the Dnieper, and the Cossacks of the Don.

The Zaporovian Commonwealth has been compared sometimes to ancient Sparta, and sometimes to the mediæval Military Orders, but it had in reality quite a different character. In Sparta the nobles kept in subjection a large population of slaves, and were themselves constantly under the severe discipline of the magistrates. These Cossacks of the Dnieper, on the contrary, lived by fishing, hunting, and marauding, and knew nothing of discipline, except in time of war. Amongst all the inhabitants of the *Setch*—so the fortified camp was called—there

* The name "Zaporovians," by which they are known in the West, is a corruption of the Russian word *Zaporozhtsi*, which means "Those who live beyond the Rapids."

reigned the most perfect equality. The common saying, "Bear patiently, Cossack; you will one day be Atamán!" was often realised; for every year the office-bearers laid down the insignia of office in presence of the general assembly, and, after thanking the brotherhood for the honour they had enjoyed, retired to their former position of common Cossack. At the election which followed this ceremony, any member could be chosen chief of his *kurén*, or company, and any chief of a *kurén* could be chosen *Atamán*.

The comparison of these bold Borderers with the mediæval Military Orders is scarcely less forced. They call themselves, indeed, *Lytsars*—a corruption of the Russian word *Ritsar*, which is in its turn a corruption of the German *Ritter*—talked of knightly honour (*lýtsarskaya tchest'*), and sometimes proclaimed themselves the champions of Greek Orthodoxy against the Roman Catholicism of the Poles and the Mahometanism of the Tartars; but religion occupied in their minds a very secondary place. Their great object in life was the acquisition of booty. To attain this object they lived in intermittent warfare with the Tartars, lifted their cattle, pillaged their *aouls*, swept the Black Sea in flotillas of small boats, and occasionally sacked important coast towns, such as Varna and Sinope. When Tartar booty could not be easily obtained, they turned their attention to the Slavonic populations; and when hard pressed by Christian potentates, they did not hesitate to put themselves under the protection of the Sultan.

The Cossacks of the Don, of the Volga, and of the Ural had a somewhat different organisation. They had no fortified camp like the *Setch*, but lived in villages, and assembled as necessity demanded. As

they were completely beyond the sphere of Polish influence, they knew nothing about "knightly honour" and similar conceptions of Western chivalry; they even adopted many Tartar customs, and loved in time of peace to strut about in gorgeous Tartar costumes. Besides this, they were nearly all emigrants from Great Russia, and mostly Old Ritualists or Sectarians, whilst the Zaporovians were Little Russians and Orthodox.

These military communities rendered valuable service to Russia. The best means of protecting the southern frontier was to have as allies a large body of men leading the same kind of life and capable of carrying on the same kind of warfare as the nomadic marauders; and such a body of men were the Free Cossacks. The sentiment of self-preservation and the desire of booty kept them constantly on the alert. By sending out small parties in all directions, by "procuring tongues"—that is to say, by kidnapping and torturing straggling Tartars with a view to extracting information from them—and by keeping spies in the enemy's territory, they were generally apprised beforehand of any intended incursion. When danger threatened, the ordinary precautions were redoubled. Day and night patrols kept watch at the points where the enemy was expected, and as soon as sure signs of his approach were discovered, a pile of tarred barrels prepared for the purpose was fired to give the alarm. Rapidly the signal was repeated at one point of observation after another, and by this primitive system of telegraphy in the course of a few hours the whole district was up in arms. If the invaders were not too numerous, they were at once attacked and driven back. If they could not be successfully resisted, they were allowed to pass; but a troop of Cossacks was sent to pillage their *aouls* in their

absence, whilst another and larger force was collected, in order to intercept them when they were returning home laden with booty. Thus many a nameless battle was fought on the trackless Steppe, and many brave men fell unhonoured and unsung—

"Illacrymabiles
Urgentur ignotique longa
Nocte, carent quia vate sacro."

Notwithstanding these valuable services, the Cossack communities were a constant source of diplomatic difficulties and political dangers. As they paid very little attention to the orders of the Government, they supplied the Sultan with any number of *casus belli*, and were often ready to turn their arms against the power to which they professed allegiance. During "the troublous times," for example, when the national existence was endangered by civil strife and foreign invasion, they overran the country, robbing, pillaging, and burning as they were wont to do in the Tartar *aouls*. At a later period the Don Cossacks twice raised formidable insurrections—first under Stenka Razin (1670), and secondly under Pugatchéf (1773)—and during the war between Peter the Great and Charles XII. of Sweden, the Zaporovians took the side of the Swedish king.

The Government naturally strove to put an end to this danger, and ultimately succeeded. All the Cossacks were deprived of their independence, but the fate of the various communities was different. Those of the Volga were transferred to the Terek, where they had abundant occupation in guarding the frontier against the incursions of the Eastern Caucasian tribes. The Zaporovians held tenaciously to their "Dnieper liberties," and resisted all interference, till they were forcibly disbanded in the time of Catherine II. The majority of them fled to Turkey, where some of their

descendants are still to be found, and the remainder were settled on the Kubán, where they could lead their old life by carrying on an irregular warfare with the tribes of the Western Caucasus. Since the capture of Shamyl and the pacification of the Caucasus, this Cossack population of the Kubán and the Terek, extending in an unbroken line from the Sea of Azof to the Caspian, have been able to turn their attention to peaceful pursuits, and now raise large quantities of wheat for exportation; but they still retain their martial bearing, and some of them regret the good old times when a brush with the Circassians was an ordinary occurrence and the work of tilling the soil was often diversified with a more exciting kind of occupation.

The Cossacks of the Ural and the Don have been allowed to remain in their old homes, but they have been deprived of their independence and self-government, and their social organisation has been completely changed. The boisterous popular assemblies which formerly decided all public affairs have been abolished, and the custom of choosing the *Atamán* and other office-bearers by popular election has been replaced by a system of regular promotion, according to rules elaborated in St. Petersburg. The officers and their families now compose a kind of hereditary aristocracy, which has succeeded in appropriating, by means of Imperial grants, a large portion of the land which was formerly common property.

As the Empire expanded in Asia, the system of protecting the frontier by Cossack colonists was extended eastwards, so that now there is a belt of Cossack territory stretching almost without interruption from the banks of the Don to the coast of the Pacific. It is divided into eleven sections, in each of which is settled a Cossack corps with a separate administration.

When universal military service was introduced in 1873, the Cossacks were brought under the new law; but in order to preserve their military traditions and habits they were allowed to retain, with certain modifications, their old organisation, rights and privileges. In return for a large amount of fertile land and exemption from direct taxation, they have to equip themselves at their own expense, and serve for twenty years, of which three are spent in preparatory training, twelve in the active army, and five in the reserve. This system gives to the army a contingent of about 330,000 men—divided into 890 squadrons and 108 infantry companies—with 236 guns.

The Cossacks in active service are to be met with in all parts of the Empire, from the Prussian to the Chinese frontier. In the Asiatic Provinces their services are invaluable. Capable of enduring an incredible amount of fatigue and all manner of privations, they can live and thrive in conditions which would soon disable regular troops. The capacity of self-adaptation, which is characteristic of the Russian people generally, is possessed by them in the highest degree. When placed on some distant Asiatic frontier they can at once transform themselves into squatters—building their own house, raising crops of grain, and living as colonists without neglecting their military duties.

I have sometimes heard it asserted by military men that the Cossack organisation is an antiquated institution, and that the soldiers which it produces, however useful they may be in Central Asia, would be of little service in regular European warfare. Whether this view, which received some confirmation in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, is true or false I cannot pretend to say, for it is a subject on which a civilian has no right to speak, but I may remark that the Cossacks

themselves are not by any means of that opinion. They regard themselves as the most valuable troops which the Tsar possesses, believing themselves capable of performing anything within the bounds of human possibility, and a good deal that lies beyond that limit. More than once Don Cossacks have assured me that if the Tsar had allowed them to fit out a flotilla of small boats during the Crimean War they would have captured the British fleet, as their ancestors used to capture Turkish galleys on the Black Sea!

In old times, throughout the whole territory of the Don Cossacks, agriculture was prohibited on pain of death. It is generally supposed that this measure was adopted with a view to preserve the martial spirit of the inhabitants, but it may be explained otherwise. The great majority of the Cossacks, averse to all regular, laborious occupations, wished to live by fishing, hunting, cattle-breeding, and marauding, but there was always amongst them a considerable number of immigrants—runaway serfs from the interior—who had been accustomed to live by agriculture. These latter wished to raise crops on the fertile virgin soil, and if they had been allowed to do so they would have to some extent spoiled the pastures. We have here, I believe, the true reason for the above-mentioned prohibition, and this view is strongly confirmed by analogous facts which I have observed in another locality. In the Kirghiz territory the poorer inhabitants of the *aouls* near the frontier, having few or no cattle, wish to let part of the common land to the neighbouring Russian peasantry for agricultural purposes; but the richer inhabitants, who possess flocks and herds, strenuously oppose this movement, and would doubtless prohibit it under pain of death if they had the power, because all agricultural encroachments diminish the pasture-land.

Whatever was the real reason of the prohibition, practical necessity proved in the long run too strong for the anti-agriculturists. As the population augmented and the opportunities for marauding decreased, the majority had to overcome their repugnance to husbandry; and soon large patches of ploughed land or waving grain were to be seen in the vicinity of the *stanitsas*, as the Cossack villages are termed. At first there was no attempt to regulate this new use of the *ager publicus*. Each Cossack who wished to raise a crop ploughed and sowed wherever he thought fit, and retained as long as he chose the land thus appropriated; and when the soil began to show signs of exhaustion, he abandoned his plot and ploughed elsewhere. But this unregulated use of the Communal property could not long continue. As the number of agriculturists increased, quarrels frequently arose, and sometimes terminated in bloodshed. Still worse evils appeared when markets were created in the vicinity, and it became possible to sell the grain for exportation. In some *stanitsas* the richer families appropriated enormous quantities of the common land by using several teams of oxen, or by hiring peasants in the nearest villages to come and plough for them; and instead of abandoning the land after raising two or three crops they retained possession of it, and came to regard it as their private property. Thus the whole of the arable land, or at least the best part of it, became actually, if not legally, the private property of a few families, whilst the less energetic or less fortunate inhabitants of the *stanitsa* had only parcels of comparatively barren soil, or had no land whatever, and became mere agricultural labourers.

After a time this injustice was remedied. The landless members justly complained that they had to bear the same burdens as those who possessed the

land, and that therefore they ought to enjoy the same privileges. The old spirit of equality was still strong amongst them, and they ultimately succeeded in asserting their rights. In accordance with their demands the appropriated land was confiscated by the Communes, and the system of periodical re-distributions was introduced. By this system each adult male possesses a share of the land.

These facts tend to throw light on some of the dark questions of social development in its early stages.

So long as a village community leads a purely pastoral life, and possesses an abundance of land, there is no reason why the individuals or the families of which it is composed should divide the land into private lots, and there are very potent reasons why they should not adopt such a course. To give the division of the land any practical significance, it would be necessary to raise fences of some kind, and these fences, requiring for their construction a certain amount of labour, would prove merely a useless encumbrance, for it is much more convenient that all the sheep and cattle should graze together. If there is a scarcity of pasture, and consequently a conflict of interest among the families, the enjoyment of the common land will be regulated not by raising fences, but by simply limiting the number of sheep and cattle which each family is entitled to put upon the pasturage, as is done in many Russian villages at the present day. When anyone desires to keep more sheep and cattle than the maximum to which he is entitled, he pays to the others a certain compensation. Thus, we see, in pastoral life the dividing of the common land is unnecessary and inexpedient, and consequently private property in land is not likely to come into existence.

With the introduction of agriculture appears a tendency to divide the land among the families composing the community, for each family living by husbandry requires a definite portion of the soil. If the land suitable for agricultural purposes be plentiful, each head of a family may be allowed to take possession of as much of it as he requires, as was formerly done in the Cossack *stanitsas*; if, on the contrary, the area of arable land is small, as is the case in some Bashkir *aouls*, there will probably be a regular allotment of it among the families.

With the tendency to divide the land into definite portions arises a conflict between the principle of communal and the principle of private property. Those who obtain definite portions of the soil are in general likely to keep them and transmit them to their descendants. In a country, however, like the Steppe —and it is only of such countries that I am at present speaking—the nature of the soil and the system of agriculture militate against this conversion of simple possession into a right of property. A plot of land is commonly cultivated for only three or four years in succession. It is then abandoned for at least double that period, and the cultivators remove to some other portion of the communal territory. After a time, it is true, they return to the old portion, which has been in the meantime lying fallow; but as the soil is tolerably equal in quality, the families or individuals have no reason to desire the precise plots which they formerly possessed. Under such circumstances the principle of private property in the land is not likely to strike root; each family insists on possessing a certain *quantity* rather than a certain *plot* of land, and contents itself with a right of usufruct, whilst the right of property remains in the hands of the Commune; and it must not be forgotten that the

difference between usufruct and property is here of great practical importance, for so long as the Commune retains the right of property it may re-allot the land in any way it thinks fit.

As the population increases and land becomes less plentiful, the primitive method of agriculture above alluded to gives place to a less primitive method, commonly known as "the three-field system," according to which the cultivators do not migrate periodically from one part of the communal territory to another, but till always the same fields, and are obliged to manure the plots which they occupy. The principle of communal property rarely survives this change, for by long possession the families acquire a prescriptive right to the portions which they cultivate, and those who manure their land well naturally object to exchange it for land which has been held by indolent, improvident neighbours. In Russia, however, this change has not destroyed the principle of communal property. Though the three-field system has been in use for many generations in the central provinces, the communal principle, with its periodical re-allotment of the land, still remains intact.

For the student of sociology, the past history and actual condition of the Don Cossacks present many other features equally interesting and instructive. He may there see, for instance, how an aristocracy can be created by military promotion, and how serfage may originate and become a recognised institution without any legislative enactment. If he takes an interest in peculiar manifestations of religious thought and feeling, he will find a rich field of investigation in the countless religious sects; and if he is a collector of quaint old customs, he will not lack occupation.

One curious custom, which has very recently died out, I may here mention by way of illustration. As

the Cossacks knew very little about land-surveying, and still less about land registration, the precise boundary between two contiguous *yurts*—as the communal land of a *stanitsa* was called—was often a matter of uncertainty and a fruitful source of disputes. When the boundary was once determined, the following method of registering it was employed. All the boys of the two *stanitsas* were collected and driven in a body like sheep to the intervening frontier. The whole population then walked along the frontier that had been agreed upon, and at each landmark a number of boys were soundly whipped and allowed to run home! This was done in the hope that the victims would remember, as long as they lived, the spot where they had received their unmerited castigation.* The device, I have been assured, was generally very effective, but it was not always quite successful. Whether from the castigation not being sufficiently severe, or from some other defect in the method, it sometimes happened that disputes afterwards arose, and the whipped boys, now grown up to manhood, gave conflicting testimony. When such a case occurred the following expedient was adopted. One of the oldest inhabitants was chosen as arbiter, and made to swear on the Scriptures that he would act honestly to the best of his knowledge; then, taking an Icon in his hand, he walked along what he believed to be the old frontier. Whether he made mistakes or not, his decision was accepted by both parties and regarded as final. This custom existed in some *stanitsas* down to the year 1850, when the boundaries were clearly determined by Government officials.

* A custom of this kind, I am told, existed not very long ago in England, and is still spoken of as "the beating of the bounds."

CHAPTER XVI.

FOREIGN COLONISTS ON THE STEPPE.

The Steppe—Variety of Races, Languages, and Religions—The German Colonists—In what sense the Russians are an Imitative People—The Mennonites—Climate and Arboriculture—Bulgarian Colonists—Tartar-speaking Greeks—Jewish Agriculturists—Russification—A Circassian Scotchman—Numerical Strength of the Foreign Element.

In European Russia the struggle between agriculture and nomadic barbarism is now a thing of the past, and the fertile Steppe, which was for centuries a battle-ground of the Aryan and Turanian races, has been incorporated into the dominions of the Tsar. The nomadic tribes have been partly driven out and partly pacified and parked in "reserves," and the territory which they so long and so stubbornly defended is now studded with peaceful villages and tilled by laborious agriculturists.

In traversing this region the ordinary tourist will find little to interest him. He will see nothing which he can possibly dignify by the name of scenery, and he may journey on for many days without having any occasion to make an entry in his note-book. If he should happen, however, to be an ethnologist and linguist, he may find occupation, for he will here meet with fragments of many different races and a variety of foreign tongues.

This ethnological variety is the result of a policy inaugurated by Catherine II. So long as the southern frontier was pushed forward slowly, the acquired territory was regularly filled up by Russian peasants from the central provinces who were anxious to obtain more land and more liberty than they enjoyed

in their native villages; but during "the glorious age of Catherine" the frontier was pushed forward so rapidly that the old method of spontaneous emigration no longer sufficed to people the annexed territory. The Empress had recourse, therefore, to organised emigration from foreign countries. Her diplomatic representatives in Western Europe tried to induce artisans and peasants to emigrate to Russia, and special agents were sent to various countries to supplement the efforts of the diplomatists. Thousands accepted the invitation, and were for the most part settled on the land which had been recently the pasture-ground of the nomadic hordes.

This policy was adopted by succeeding sovereigns, and the consequence of it has been that Southern Russia now contains a variety of races such as is to be found, perhaps, nowhere else in Europe. The official statistics of New Russia alone —that is to say, the provinces of Ekaterinosláf, Tauride, Kherson, and Bessarabia—enumerate the following nationalities: Great Russians, Little Russians, Poles, Servians, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Moldavians, Germans, English, Swedes, Swiss, French, Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Tartars, Mordwá, Jews, and Gypsies. The religions are almost equally numerous. The statistics speak of Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Gregorians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Mennonites, Separatists, Pietists, Karaïm Jews, Talmudists, Mahometans, and numerous Russian sects, such as the Molokánye and the Skoptsi or Eunuchs. America herself could scarcely show a more motley list in her statistics of population.

It is but fair to state that the above list, though literally correct, does not give a true idea of the actual population. The great body of the inhabitants

are Russian and Orthodox, whilst several of the nationalities named are represented by a small number of souls—some of them, such as the French, being found exclusively in the towns. Still, the variety even in the rural population is very great. Once, in the space of three days, and using only the most primitive means of conveyance, I visited colonies of Greeks, Germans, Servians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, and Jews.

Of all the foreign colonists the Germans are by far the most numerous. The object of the Government in inviting them to settle in the country was that they should till the unoccupied land and thereby increase the national wealth, and that they should at the same time exercise a civilising influence on the Russian peasantry in their vicinity. In this latter respect they have totally failed to fulfil their mission. A Russian village, situated in the midst of German colonies, shows generally, so far as I could observe, no signs of German influence. Each nationality lives *more majorum*, and holds as little communication as possible with the other. The muzhik observes carefully—for he is very curious—the mode of life of his more advanced neighbours, but he never thinks of adopting it. He looks upon Germans almost as beings of a different world—as a wonderfully cunning and ingenious people, who have been endowed by Providence with peculiar qualities not possessed by ordinary Orthodox humanity. To him it seems in the nature of things that Germans should live in large, clean, well-built houses, in the same way as it is in the nature of things that birds should build nests; and as it has probably never occurred to a human being to build a nest for himself and his family, so it never occurs to a Russian peasant to build a house on the German model. Germans are Germans, and Russians

are Russians—and there is nothing more to be said on the subject.

This stubbornly conservative spirit of the peasantry who live in the neighbourhood of Germans seems to give the lie direct to the oft-repeated and universally believed assertion that Russians are an imitative people strongly disposed to adopt the manners and customs of any foreigners with whom they may come in contact. The Russian, it is said, changes his nationality as easily as he changes his coat, and derives great satisfaction from wearing some nationality that does not belong to him; but here we have an important fact which appears to prove the contrary.

The truth is that in this matter we must distinguish between the Noblesse and the peasantry. The nobles are singularly prone to adopt foreign manners, customs, and institutions; the peasants, on the contrary, are as a rule decidedly conservative. It must not, however, be supposed that this proceeds from a difference of race; the difference is to be explained by the past history of the two classes. Like all other peoples, the Russians are strongly conservative so long as they remain in what may be termed their primitive moral habitat—that is to say, so long as external circumstances do not force them out of their accustomed traditional groove. The Noblesse were long ago violently forced out of their old groove by the reforming Tsars, and since that time they have been so constantly driven hither and thither by foreign influences that they have never been able to form a new one. Thus they easily enter upon any new path which seems to them profitable or attractive. The great mass of the people, on the contrary, too heavy to be thus lifted out of the guiding influence of custom and tradition, are still animated with a strongly conservative spirit.

In confirmation of this view I may mention two facts which have often attracted my attention. The first is that the Molokánye—a primitive Evangelical sect of which I shall speak at length in the next chapter—succumb gradually to German influence; by becoming heretics in religion they free themselves from one of the strongest bonds attaching them to the past, and soon become heretics in things secular. The second fact is that even the Orthodox peasant, when placed by circumstances in some new sphere of activity, readily adopts whatever seems profitable. Take, for example, the peasants who abandon agriculture and embark in industrial enterprises; finding themselves, as it were, in a new world, in which their old traditional notions are totally inapplicable, they have no hesitation in adopting foreign ideas and foreign inventions. And when once they have chosen this new path, they are much more "go-ahead" than the Germans. Freed alike from the trammels of hereditary conceptions and from the prudence which experience generates, they often give a loose rein to their impulsive character, and enter freely on the wildest speculations.

The marked contrast presented by a German colony and a Russian village in close proximity with each other is often used to illustrate the superiority of the Teutonic over the Slavonic race, and in order to make the contrast more striking, the Mennonite colonies are generally taken as the representatives of the Germans. Without entering here on the general question, I must say that this method of argumentation is scarcely fair. The Mennonites, who formerly lived in the neighbourhood of Danzig and emigrated from Prussia in order to escape the military conscription, brought with them to their new home a large store of useful technical knowledge and a considerable

amount of capital, and they received a quantity of land very much greater than the Russian peasants possess. Besides this, they enjoyed until very recently several valuable privileges. They were entirely exempted from military service and almost entirely exempted from taxation. Altogether their lines fell in very pleasant places. In material and moral well-being they stand as far above the majority of the ordinary German colonists as these latter do above their Russian neighbours. Even in the richest districts of Germany their prosperity would attract attention. To compare these rich, privileged, well-educated farmers with the poor, heavily taxed, uneducated peasantry, and to draw from the comparison conclusions concerning the capabilities of the two races, is a proceeding so absurd that it requires no further comment.

To the wearied traveller who has been living for some time in Russian villages one of these Mennonite colonies seems an earthly paradise. In a little hollow, perhaps by the side of a watercourse, he suddenly comes on a long row of high-roofed houses half concealed in trees. The trees may be found on closer inspection to be little better than mere saplings; but after a long journey on the bare Steppe, where there is neither tree nor bush of any kind, the foliage, scant as it is, appears singularly inviting. The houses are large, well arranged, and kept in such thoroughly good repair that they always appear to be newly built. The rooms are plainly furnished, without any pretensions to elegance, but scrupulously clean. Adjoining the house are the stable and byre, which would not disgrace a model farm in Germany or England. In front is a spacious courtyard, which has the appearance of being swept several times a day, and behind there is a garden well stocked with

vegetables. Fruit trees and flowers are not very plentiful, for the climate is not favourable to them.

The inhabitants are honest, frugal folk, somewhat sluggish of intellect and indifferent to things lying beyond the narrow limits of their own little world, but shrewd enough in all matters which they deem worthy of their attention. If you arrive amongst them as a stranger you may be a little chilled by the welcome you receive, for they are exclusive, reserved, and distrustful, and do not much like to associate with those who do not belong to their own sect; but if you can converse with them in their mother tongue and talk about religious matters in an evangelical tone, you may easily overcome their stiffness and exclusiveness. Altogether such a village cannot be recommended for a lengthened sojourn, for the severe order and symmetry which everywhere prevail would soon prove irksome to anyone having no Dutch blood in his veins;* but as a temporary resting-place during a pilgrimage on the Steppe, when the pilgrim is longing for a little cleanliness and comfort, it is very agreeable.

The fact that these Mennonites and some other German colonies have succeeded in rearing a few sickly trees has suggested to some fertile minds the idea that the prevailing dryness of the climate, which is the chief difficulty with which the agriculturist of that region has to contend, might be to some extent counteracted by arboriculture on a large scale. This scheme, though it has been seriously entertained by one of his Majesty's ministers, must seem hardly practicable to anyone who knows how much labour

* The Mennonites were originally Dutchmen. Persecuted for their religious views in the sixteenth century, a large number of them accepted an invitation to settle in West Prussia, where they helped to drain the great marshes between Danzig, Elbing, and Marienburg. Here in the course of time they forgot their native language. Their emigration to Russia began in 1789.

and money the colonists have expended in creating that agreeable shade which they love to enjoy in their leisure hours. If climate is affected at all by the existence or non-existence of forests—a point on which scientific men do not seem to be entirely agreed —any palpable increase of the rainfall can be produced only by forests of enormous extent, and it is hardly conceivable that these could be artificially produced in Southern Russia. It is quite possible, however, that local ameliorations may be effected. During a visit to the province of Voronezh in 1903 I found that comparatively small plantations diminished the effects of drought in their immediate vicinity by retaining the moisture for a time in the soil and the surrounding atmosphere.

After the Mennonites and other Germans, the Bulgarian colonists deserve a passing notice. They settled in this region much more recently, on the land that was left vacant by the exodus of the Nogaï Tartars after the Crimean War. If I may judge of their condition by a mere flying visit, I should say that in agriculture and domestic civilisation they are not very far behind the majority of German colonists. Their houses are indeed small—so small that one of them might almost be put into a single room of a Mennonite's house; but there is an air of cleanliness and comfort about them that would do credit to a German housewife.

In spite of all this, these Bulgarians were, I could easily perceive, by no means delighted with their new home. The cause of their discontent, so far as I could gather from the few laconic remarks which I extracted from them, seemed to be this. Trusting to the highly coloured descriptions furnished by the emigration agents who had induced them to change the rule of the Sultan for the

authority of the Tsar, they came to Russia with the expectation of finding a fertile and beautiful Promised Land. Instead of a land flowing with milk and honey, they received a tract of bare Steppe on which even water could be obtained only with great difficulty —with no shade to protect them from the heat of summer and nothing to shelter them from the keen northern blasts that often sweep over those open plains. As no adequate arrangements had been made for their reception, they were quartered during the first winter on the German colonists, who, being quite innocent of any Slavophil sympathies, were probably not very hospitable to their uninvited guests. To complete their disappointment, they found that they could not cultivate the vine, and that their mild, fragrant tobacco, which is for them a necessary of life, could be obtained only at a very high price. So disconsolate were they under this cruel disenchantment that, at the time of my visit, they talked of returning to their old homes in Turkey.

As an example of the less prosperous colonists, I may mention the Tartar-speaking Greeks in the neighbourhood of Mariúpol, on the northern shore of the Sea of Azof. Their ancestors lived in the Crimea, under the rule of the Tartar Khans, and emigrated to Russia in the time of Catherine II., before Crim Tartary was annexed to the Russian Empire. They have almost entirely forgotten their old language, but have preserved their old faith. In adopting the Tartar language they have adopted something of Tartar indolence and apathy, and the natural consequence is that they are poor and ignorant.

But of all the colonists of this region the least prosperous are the Jews. The Chosen People are certainly a most intelligent, industrious, frugal race, and

in all matters of buying, selling, and bartering they are unrivalled among the nations of the earth, but they have been too long accustomed to town life to be good tillers of the soil. These Jewish colonies were founded as an experiment to see whether the Israelite could be weaned from his traditionary pursuits and transferred to what some economists call the productive section of society. The experiment has failed, and the cause of the failure is not difficult to find. One has merely to look at these men of gaunt visage and shambling gait, with their loop-holed slippers, and black, threadbare coats reaching down to their ankles, to understand that they are not in their proper sphere. Their houses are in a most dilapidated condition, and their villages remind one of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet. A great part of their land is left uncultivated or let to colonists of a different race. What little revenue they have is derived chiefly from trade of a more or less clandestine nature.*

As Scandinavia was formerly called *officina gentium* —a workshop in which new nations were made—so we may regard Southern Russia as a workshop in which fragments of old nations are being melted down to form a new, composite whole. It must be confessed, however, that the melting process has as yet scarcely begun.

National peculiarities are not obliterated so rapidly in Russia as in America or in British colonies. Among the German colonists in Russia the process of assimilation is hardly perceptible. Though their fathers and grandfathers may have been born in the new country, they would consider it an insult to be called Russians. They look down upon the Russian peasantry as poor,

* Mr. Arnold White, who subsequently visited some of these Jewish colonies in connection with Baron Hirsch's colonisation scheme, assured me that he found them in a much more prosperous condition.

ignorant, lazy, and dishonest, fear the officials on account of their tyranny and extortion, preserve jealously their own language and customs, rarely speak Russian well—sometimes not at all—and never intermarry with those from whom they are separated by nationality and religion. The Russian influence acts, however, more rapidly on the Slavonic colonists—Servians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins—who profess the Greek Orthodox faith, learn more easily the Russian language, which is closely allied to their own, have no consciousness of belonging to a *Culturvolk*, and in general possess a nature much more pliable than the Teutonic.

The Government has recently attempted to accelerate the fusing process by retracting the privileges granted to the colonists and abolishing the peculiar administration under which they were placed. These measures—especially the universal military service—may eventually diminish the extreme exclusiveness of the Germans; the youths, whilst serving in the army, will at least learn the Russian language, and may possibly imbibe something of the Russian spirit. But for the present this new policy has aroused a strong feeling of hostility and greatly intensified the spirit of exclusiveness. In the German colonies I have often overheard complaints about Russian tyranny and uncomplimentary remarks about the Russian national character.

The Mennonites consider themselves specially aggrieved by the so-called reforms. They came to Russia in order to escape military service and with the distinct understanding that they should be exempted from it, and now they are forced to act contrary to the religious tenets of their sect. This is the ground of complaint which they put forward in the petitions addressed to the Government, but they have at the same time another, and perhaps more important,

objection to the proposed changes. They feel, as several of them admitted to me, that if the barrier which separates them from the rest of the population were in any way broken down, they could no longer preserve that stern Puritanical discipline which at present constitutes their force. Hence, though the Government was disposed to make important concessions, hundreds of families sold their property and emigrated to America. The movement, however, did not become general. At present the Russian Mennonites number, male and female, about 50,000, divided into 160 colonies and possessing over 800,000 acres of land.

It is quite possible that under the new system of administration the colonists who profess, in common with the Russians, the Greek Orthodox faith may be rapidly Russianised; but I am convinced that the others will long resist all assimilation. Greek orthodoxy and Protestant sectarianism are so radically different in spirit that their respective votaries are not likely to intermarry; and without intermarriage it is impossible that the two nationalities should blend together.

As an instance of the ethnological curiosities which the traveller may stumble upon unawares in this curious region, I may mention a strange acquaintance I made when travelling on the great plain which stretches from the Sea of Azof to the Caspian. One day I accidentally noticed on my travelling-map the name "Shotlándskaya Kolóniya" (Scottish Colony) near the celebrated baths of Piatigorsk. I was at that moment in Stávropol, a town about eighty miles to the north, and could not gain any satisfactory information as to what this colony was. Some well-informed people assured me that it really was what its name implied, whilst others asserted as confidently

that it was simply a small German settlement. To decide the matter I determined to visit the place myself, though it did not lie near my intended route, and I accordingly found myself one morning in the village in question. The first inhabitants whom I encountered were unmistakably German, and they professed to know nothing about the existence of Scotsmen in the locality either at the present or in former times. This was disappointing, and I was about to turn away and drive off, when a young man, who proved to be the schoolmaster, came up, and on hearing what I desired, advised me to consult an old Circassian who lived at the end of the village and was well acquainted with local antiquities. On proceeding to the house indicated, I found a venerable old man, with fine regular features of the Circassian type, coal-black sparkling eyes, and a long grey beard that would have done honour to a patriarch. To him I explained briefly, in Russian, the object of my visit, and asked whether he knew of any Scotsmen in the district.

"And why do you wish to know?" he replied, in the same language, fixing me with his keen, sparkling eyes.

"Because I am myself a Scotsman, and hoped to find fellow-countrymen here."

Let the reader imagine my astonishment when, in reply to this, he answered, in genuine broad Scotch, "Od, man, I'm a Scotsman tae! My name is John Abercrombie. Did ye never hear tell o' John Abercrombie, the famous Edinburgh doctor?"

I was fairly puzzled by this extraordinary declaration. Dr. Abercrombie's name was familiar to me as that of a medical practitioner and writer on psychology, but I knew that he was long since dead. When I had recovered a little from my surprise, I ventured

to remark to the enigmatical personage before me that, though his tongue was certainly Scotch, his face was as certainly Circassian.

"Weel, weel," he replied, evidently enjoying my look of mystification, "you're no' far wrang. I'm a Circassian Scotsman!"

This extraordinary admission did not diminish my perplexity, so I begged my new acquaintance to be a little more explicit, and he at once complied with my request. His long story may be told in a few words:—

In the first years of the present century a band of Scotch missionaries came to Russia for the purpose of converting the Circassian tribes, and received from the Emperor Alexander I. a large grant of land in this place, which was then on the frontier of the Empire. Here they founded a mission, and began the work; but they soon discovered that the surrounding population were not idolaters, but Mussulmans, and consequently impervious to Christianity. In this difficulty they fell on the happy idea of buying Circassian children from their parents, and bringing them up as Christians. One of these children, purchased about the year 1806, was a little boy called Teoona. As he had been purchased with money subscribed by Dr. Abercrombie, he had received in baptism that gentleman's name, and he considered himself the foster-son of his benefactor. Here was the explanation of the mystery.

Teoona, *alias* Mr. Abercrombie, was a man of more than average intelligence. Besides his native tongue, he spoke English, German, and Russian perfectly; and he assured me that he knew several other languages equally well. His life had been devoted to missionary work, and especially to translating and printing the Scriptures. He had laboured first in

Astrakhan, then for four years and a half in Persia—in the service of the Bâle mission—and afterwards for six years in Siberia.

The Scottish mission was suppressed by the Emperor Nicholas about the year 1835, and all the missionaries except two returned home. The son of one of these two (Galloway) was the only genuine Scotsman remaining at the time of my visit. Of the "Circassian Scotsmen" there were several, most of whom had married Germans. The other inhabitants were German colonists from the province of Sarâtof, and German was the language commonly spoken in the village.

After hearing so much about foreign colonists, Tartar invaders, and Finnish aborigines, the reader may naturally desire to know the numerical strength of this foreign element. Unfortunately we have no accurate data on this subject, but from a careful examination of the available statistics I am inclined to conclude that it constitutes about one-sixth of the population of European Russia, excluding Poland, Finland, and the Caucasus, and nearly a third of the population of the Empire as a whole.

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG THE HERETICS.

The Molokánye—My Method of Investigation—Alexandrof-Haï—An Unexpected Theological Discussion—Doctrines and Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Molokánye—Moral Supervision and Mutual Assistance—History of the Sect—A False Prophet—Utilitarian Christianity—Classification of the Fantastic Sects—The "Khlysti"—Policy of the Government towards Sectarianism—Two Kinds of Heresy—Probable Future of the Heretical Sects—Political Disaffection.

WHILST travelling on the Steppe I heard a great deal about a peculiar religious sect called the Molokánye, and I felt interested in them because their religious belief, whatever it was, seemed to have a beneficial influence on their material welfare. Of the same race and placed in the same conditions as the Orthodox peasantry around them, they were undoubtedly better housed, better clad, more punctual in the payment of their taxes, and, in a word, more prosperous. All my informants agreed in describing them as quiet, decent, sober people; but regarding their religious doctrines the evidence was vague and contradictory. Some described them as Protestants or Lutherans, whilst others believed them to be the last remnants of a curious heretical sect which existed in the early Christian Church.

Desirous of obtaining clearer notions on the subject I determined to investigate the matter for myself. At first I found this to be no easy task. In the villages through which I passed I found numerous members of the sect, but they all showed a decided repugnance to speak about their religious beliefs. Long accustomed to extortion and persecution at the

hands of the Administration, and suspecting me to be a secret agent of the Government, they carefully avoided speaking on any subject beyond the state of the weather and the prospects of the harvest, and replied to my questions on other topics as if they had been standing before a Grand Inquisitor.

A few unsuccessful attempts convinced me that it would be impossible to extract from them their religious beliefs by direct questioning. I adopted, therefore, a different system of tactics. From meagre replies already received I had discovered that their doctrine had at least a superficial resemblance to Presbyterianism, and from former experience I was aware that the curiosity of intelligent Russian peasants is easily excited by descriptions of foreign countries. On these two facts I based my plan of campaign. When I found a Molokán, or someone whom I suspected to be such, I talked for some time about the weather and the crops, as if I had no ulterior object in view. Having fully discussed this matter, I led the conversation gradually from the weather and crops in Russia to the weather and crops in Scotland, and then passed slowly from Scotch agriculture to the Scotch Presbyterian Church. On nearly every occasion this policy succeeded. When the peasant heard that there was a country where the people interpreted the Scriptures for themselves, had no bishops, and considered the veneration of Icons as idolatry, he invariably listened with profound attention; and when he learned further that in that wonderful country the parishes annually sent deputies to an assembly in which all matters pertaining to the Church were freely and publicly discussed, he almost always gave free expression to his astonishment, and I had to answer a whole volley of questions. "Where is that country?" "Is it to the east, or the west?" "Is it

very far away?" "If our Presbyter could only hear all that!"

This last expression was precisely what I wanted, because it gave me an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the Presbyter, or pastor, without seeming to desire it; and I knew that a conversation with that personage, who is always an uneducated peasant like the others, but is generally more intelligent and better acquainted with religious doctrine, would certainly be of use to me. On more than one occasion I spent a great part of the night with a Presbyter, and thereby learned much concerning the religious beliefs and practices of the sect. After these interviews I was sure to be treated with confidence and respect by all the Molokánye in the village, and recommended to the brethren of the faith in the neighbouring villages through which I intended to pass. Several of the more intelligent peasants with whom I spoke advised me strongly to visit Alexandrof-Haï, a village situated on the borders of the Kirghiz Steppe. "We are dark (*i.e.*, ignorant) people here," they were wont to say, "and do not know anything, but in Alexandrof-Haï you will find those who know the faith, and they will discuss with you." This prediction was fulfilled in a somewhat unexpected way.

When returning some weeks later from a visit to the Kirghiz of the Inner Horde, I arrived one evening at this centre of the Molokán faith, and was hospitably received by one of the brotherhood. In conversing casually with my host on religious subjects I expressed to him a desire to find someone well read in Holy Writ and well grounded in the faith, and he promised to do what he could for me in this respect. Next morning he kept his promise with a vengeance. Immediately after the tea-urn had been removed, the door of the room was opened and twelve peasants

were ushered in! After the customary salutations with these unexpected visitors, my host informed me to my astonishment that his friends had come to have a talk with me about the faith; and without further ceremony he placed before me a folio Bible in the old Slavonic tongue, in order that I might read passages in support of my arguments. As I was not at all prepared to open a formal theological discussion, I felt not a little embarrassed, and I could see that my travelling companions, two Russian friends who cared for none of these things, were thoroughly enjoying my discomfiture. There was, however, no possibility of drawing back. I had asked for an opportunity of having a talk with some of the brethren, and now I had got it in a way that I certainly did not expect. My friends withdrew—"leaving me to my fate," as they whispered to me—and the "talk" began.

My fate was by no means so terrible as had been anticipated, but at first the situation was a little awkward. Neither party had any clear ideas as to what the other desired, and my visitors expected that I was to begin the proceedings. This expectation was quite natural and justifiable, for I had inadvertently invited them to meet me, but I could not make a speech to them, for the best of all reasons—that I did not know what to say. If I told them my real aims, their suspicions would probably be aroused. My usual stratagem of the weather and the crops was wholly inapplicable. For a moment I thought of proposing that a psalm should be sung as a means of breaking the ice, but I felt that this would give to the meeting a solemnity which I wished to avoid. On the whole it seemed best to begin at once a formal discussion. I told them, therefore, that I had spoken with many of their brethren in various villages, and that I had found what I considered grave errors of doctrine. I could

not, for instance, agree with them in their belief that it was unlawful to eat pork. This was perhaps an abrupt way of entering on the subject, but it furnished at least a *locus standi*—something to talk about—and an animated discussion immediately ensued. My opponents first endeavoured to prove their thesis from the New Testament, and when this argument broke down they had recourse to the Pentateuch. From a particular article of the ceremonial law we passed to the broader question as to how far the ceremonial law is still binding, and from this to other points equally important.

If the logic of the peasants was not always unimpeachable, their knowledge of the Scriptures left nothing to be desired. In support of their views they quoted long passages from memory, and whenever I indicated vaguely any text which I needed, they at once supplied it verbatim, so that the big folio Bible served merely as an ornament. Three or four of them seemed to know the whole of the New Testament by heart. The course of our informal debate need not here be described; suffice it to say that, after four hours of uninterrupted conversation, we agreed to differ on questions of detail, and parted from each other without a trace of that ill-feeling which religious discussion commonly engenders. Never have I met men more honest and courteous in debate, more earnest in the search after truth, or more careless of dialectical triumphs, than these simple, uneducated muzhiks. If at one or two points in the discussion a little undue warmth was displayed, I must do my opponents the justice to say that they were not the offending party.

This long discussion, as well as numerous discussions which I had had before and have had since with Molokánye in various parts of the country,

confirmed my first impression that their doctrines have a strong resemblance to Presbyterianism. There is, however, an important difference. Presbyterianism has an ecclesiastical organisation and a written creed, and its doctrines have long since become clearly defined by means of public discussion, polemical literature, and general assemblies. The Molokánye, on the contrary, have had no means of developing their fundamental principles and forming their vague religious beliefs into a clearly defined logical system. Their theology is therefore still in a half-fluid state, so that it is impossible to predict what form it will ultimately assume. "We have not yet thought about that," I have frequently been told when I inquired about some abstruse doctrine; "we must talk about it at the meeting next Sunday. What is your opinion?" Besides this, their fundamental principles allow great latitude for individual and local differences of opinion. They hold that Holy Writ is the only rule of faith and conduct, but that it must be taken in the spiritual, and not in the literal, sense. As there is no terrestrial authority to which doubtful points can be referred, each individual is free to adopt the interpretation which commends itself to his own judgment. This will no doubt ultimately lead to a variety of sects, and already there is a considerable diversity of opinion between different communities; but this diversity has not yet been recognised, and I may say that I nowhere found that fanatically dogmatic, quibbling spirit which is usually the soul of sectarianism.

For their ecclesiastical organisation the Molokánye take as their model the early Apostolic Church, as depicted in the New Testament, and uncompromisingly reject all later authorities. In accordance with this model they have no hierarchy and no paid clergy, but

choose from among themselves a Presbyter and two assistants—men well known among the brethren for their exemplary life and their knowledge of the Scriptures—whose duty it is to watch over the religious and moral welfare of the flock. On Sundays they hold meetings in private houses—they are not allowed to build churches—and spend two or three hours in psalm-singing, prayer, reading the Scriptures, and friendly conversation on religious subjects. If anyone has a doctrinal difficulty which he desires to have cleared up, he states it to the congregation, and some of the others give their opinions, with the texts on which the opinions are founded. If the question seems clearly solved by the texts, it is decided; if not, it is left open.

As in many young sects, there exists among the Molokánye a system of severe moral supervision. If a member has been guilty of drunkenness or any act unbecoming a Christian, he is first admonished by the Presbyter in private or before the congregation; and if this does not produce the desired effect, he is excluded for a longer or shorter period from the meetings and from all intercourse with the members. In extreme cases expulsion is resorted to. On the other hand, if any one of the members happens to be, from no fault of his own, in pecuniary difficulties, the others will assist him. This system of mutual control and mutual assistance has no doubt something to do with the fact that the Molokánye are distinguished from the surrounding population by their sobriety, uprightness, and material prosperity.

"Of the history of the sect my friends in Alexandrof-Haï could tell me very little, but I have obtained from other quarters some interesting information. The founder was a peasant of the province of Tambóf called Uklein, who lived in the reign of Catherine II.,

and gained his living as an itinerant tailor. For some time he belonged to the sect of the Dukhobortsi—who are sometimes called the Russian Quakers, and who have recently become known in Western Europe through the efforts of Count Tolstoy on their behalf—but he soon seceded from them, because he could not admit their doctrine that God dwells in the human soul, and that consequently the chief source of religious truth is internal enlightenment. To him it seemed that religious truth was to be found only in the Scriptures. With this doctrine he soon made many converts, and one day he unexpectedly entered the town of Tambóf, surrounded by seventy "apostles" chanting psalms. They were all quickly arrested and imprisoned, and when the affair was reported to St. Petersburg the Empress Catherine ordered that they should be handed over to the ecclesiastical authorities, and that in the event of their proving obdurate to exhortation they should be tried by the Criminal Courts. Uklein professed to recant, and was liberated; but he continued his teaching secretly in the villages, and at the time of his death he was believed to have no less than five thousand followers.

As to the actual strength of the sect it is difficult to form even a conjecture. Certainly it has many thousand members—probably several hundred thousand. Formerly the Government transported them from the central provinces to the thinly populated outlying districts, where they had less opportunity of contaminating Orthodox neighbours; and accordingly we find them in the south-eastern districts of Samára, on the north coast of the Sea of Azof, in the Crimea, in the Caucasus, and in Siberia. There are still, however, very many of them in the central region, especially in the province of Tambóf.

The readiness with which the Molokánye modify their opinions and beliefs in accordance with what seems to them new light saves them effectually from bigotry and fanaticism, but it at the same time exposes them to evils of a different kind, from which they might be preserved by a few stubborn prejudices. "False prophets arise among us," said an old, sober-minded member to me on one occasion, "and lead many away from the faith."

In 1835, for example, great excitement was produced among them by rumours that the second advent of Christ was at hand, and that the Son of Man, coming to judge the world, was about to appear in the New Jerusalem, somewhere near Mount Ararat. As Elijah and Enoch were to appear before the opening of the Millennium they were anxiously awaited by the faithful, and at last Elijah appeared, in the person of a Melitopol peasant called Bêlozvorof, who announced that on a given day he would ascend into heaven. On the day appointed a great crowd collected, but he failed to keep his promise, and was handed over to the police as an impostor by the Molokánye themselves. Unfortunately they were not always so sensible as on that occasion. In the very next year many of them were persuaded by a certain Lukian Petróf to put on their best garments and start for the Promised Land in the Caucasus, where the Millennium was about to begin.

Of these false prophets the most remarkable in recent times was a man who called himself Ivan Grigorief, a mysterious personage who had at one time a Turkish and at another an American passport, but who seemed in all other respects a genuine Russian. Some years previously to my visit he appeared at Alexandrof-Haï. Though he professed himself to be a good Molokán and was received as such, he

enounced at the weekly meetings many new and startling ideas. At first he simply urged his hearers to live like the early Christians, and have all things in common. This seemed sound doctrine to the Molokányе, who profess to take the early Christians as their model, and some of them thought of at once abolishing personal property; but when the teacher intimated pretty plainly that this communism should include free love, a decided opposition arose, and it was objected that the early Church did not recommend wholesale adultery and cognate sins. This was a formidable objection, but "the prophet" was equal to the occasion. He reminded his friends that in accordance with their own doctrine the Scriptures should be understood, not in the literal, but in the spiritual, sense—that Christianity had made men free, and every true Christian ought to use his freedom.

This account of the new doctrine was given to me by an intelligent Molokán, who had formerly been a peasant and was now a trader, as I sat one evening in his house in Novo-usensk, the chief town of the district in which Alexandrof-Haï is situated. It seemed to me that the author of this ingenious attempt to conciliate Christianity with extreme Utilitarianism must be an educated man in disguise. This conviction I communicated to my host, but he did not agree with me.

"No, I think not," he replied; "in fact, I am sure he is a peasant, and I strongly suspect he was at some time a soldier. He has not much learning, but he has a wonderful gift of talking. Never have I heard anyone speak like him. He would have talked over the whole village, had it not been for an old man who was more than a match for him. And then he went to Orloff-Haï, and there he did talk the people over." What he really did in this latter place I never could

clearly ascertain. Report said that he founded a communistic association, of which he was himself president and treasurer, and converted the members to an extraordinary theory of prophetic succession, invented apparently for his own sensual gratification. For further information my host advised me to apply either to the prophet himself, who was at that time confined in the gaol on a charge of using a forged passport, or to one of his friends, a certain Mr. I——, who lived in the town. As it was a difficult matter to gain admittance to the prisoner, and I had little time at my disposal, I adopted the latter alternative.

Mr. I—— was himself a somewhat curious character. He had been a student in Moscow, and in consequence of some youthful indiscretions during the University disturbances, had been exiled to this place. After waiting in vain some years for a release, he gave up the idea of entering one of the learned professions, married a peasant-girl, rented a piece of land, bought a pair of camels, and settled down as a small farmer.* He had a great deal to tell about the prophet.

Grigorief, it seemed, was really a simple Russian peasant, but he had been from his youth upwards one of those restless people who can never long work in harness. Where his native place was, and why he left it, he never divulged, for reasons best known to himself. He had travelled much, and had been an attentive observer. Whether he had ever been in America was doubtful, but he had certainly been in Turkey, and had fraternised with various Russian sectarians, who are to be found in considerable numbers near the Danube. Here, probably, he acquired many of his peculiar religious ideas, and conceived his grand scheme

* Here for the first time I saw camels used for agricultural purposes. When yoked to a small four-wheeled cart, the "ships of the desert" seemed decidedly out of place.

of founding a new religion—of rivalling the Founder of Christianity! He aimed at nothing less than this, as he on one occasion confessed, and he did not see why he should not be successful. He believed that the Founder of Christianity had been simply a man like himself, who understood better than others the people around him and the circumstances of the time, and he was convinced that he himself had these qualifications. One qualification, however, for becoming a prophet he certainly did not possess: he had no genuine religious enthusiasm in him—nothing of the martyr spirit about him. Much of his own preaching he did not himself believe, and he had a secret contempt for those who naïvely accepted it all. Not only was he cunning, but he knew he was cunning, and he was conscious that he was playing an assumed part. And yet perhaps it would be unjust to say that he was merely an impostor exclusively occupied with his own personal advantage. Though he was naturally a man of sensual tastes, and could not resist convenient opportunities of gratifying them, he seemed to believe that his communistic schemes would, if realised, be beneficial not only to himself but also to the people. Altogether a curious mixture of the prophet, the social reformer, and the cunning impostor!

Besides the Molokánye, there are in Russia many other heretical sects. Some of them are simply Evangelical Protestants, like the "Stundisti," who have adopted the religious conceptions of their neighbours, the German colonists; whilst others are composed of wild enthusiasts, who give a loose rein to their excited imagination, and revel in what the Germans aptly term "der höhere Blödsinn." I cannot here attempt to convey even a general idea of these fantastic sects with their doctrinal and ceremonial absurdities, but I may offer the following classification

of them for the benefit of those who may desire to study the subject:—

1. Sects which take the Scriptures as the basis of their belief, but interpret and complete the doctrines therein contained by means of the occasional inspiration or internal enlightenment of their leading members.

2. Sects which reject interpretation and insist on certain passages of Scripture being taken in the literal sense. In one of the best known of these sects—the Skoptsi, or Eunuchs—fanaticism has led to physical mutilation.

3. Sects which pay little or no attention to Scripture, and derive their doctrine from the supposed inspiration of their living teachers.

4. Sects which believe in the re-incarnation of Christ.

5. Sects which confound religion with nervous excitement, and are more or less erotic in their character. The excitement necessary for prophesying is commonly produced by dancing, jumping, pirouetting, or self-castigation; and the absurdities spoken at such times are regarded as the direct expression of divine wisdom. The religious exercises resemble more or less closely those of the "dancing dervishes" and "howling dervishes," with which all who have visited Constantinople are familiar. There is, however, one important difference: the dervishes practise their religious exercises in public, and consequently observe a certain decorum, whilst these Russian sects assemble in secret, and give free scope to their excitement, so that most disgusting orgies sometimes take place at their meetings.

To illustrate the general character of the sects belonging to this last category, I may quote here a short extract from a description of the "Khlysti" by

one who was initiated into their mysteries:—"Among them men and women alike take upon themselves the calling of teachers and prophets, and in this character they lead a strict, ascetic life, refrain from the most ordinary and innocent pleasures, exhaust themselves by long fasting and wild, ecstatic religious exercises, and abhor marriage. Under the excitement caused by their supposed holiness and inspiration, they call themselves not only teachers and prophets, but also 'Saviours,' 'Redeemers,' 'Christs,' 'Mothers of God.' Generally speaking, they call themselves simply Gods, and pray to each other as to real Gods and living Christs or Madonnas. When several of these teachers come together at a meeting, they dispute with each other in a vain, boasting way as to which of them possesses most grace and power. In this rivalry they sometimes give each other lusty blows on the ear, and he who bears the blows most patiently, turning the other cheek to the smiter, acquires the reputation of having most holiness."

Another sect belonging to this category is the Jumpers, among whom the erotic element is disagreeably prominent. Here is a description of their religious meetings, which are held during summer in the forest, and during winter in some out-house or barn:—"After due preparation prayers are read by the chief teacher, dressed in a white robe and standing in the midst of the congregation. At first he reads in an ordinary tone of voice, and then passes gradually into a merry chant. When he remarks that the chanting has sufficiently acted on the hearers, he begins to jump. The hearers, singing likewise, follow his example. Their ever-increasing excitement finds expression in the highest possible jumps. This they continue as long as they can—men and women alike yelling like enraged savages. When all are thoroughly

exhausted, the leader declares that he hears the angels singing"—and then begins a scene which cannot be here described.

It is but fair to add that we know very little of these peculiar sects, and what we do know is furnished by avowed enemies. It is very possible, therefore, that some of them are not nearly so absurd as they are commonly represented, and that many of the stories told are mere calumnies.

The Government is very hostile to sectarianism, and occasionally endeavours to suppress it. This is natural enough as regards these fantastic sects, but it seems strange that the peaceful, industrious, honest Molokánye and Stundisti should be put under the ban. Why is it that a Russian peasant should be punished for holding doctrines which are openly professed, with the sanction of the authorities, by his neighbours, the German colonists?

To understand this the reader must know that according to Russian conceptions there are two distinct kinds of heresy, distinguished from each other, not by the doctrines held, but by the nationality of the holder. It seems to a Russian in the nature of things that Tartars should be Mahometans, that Poles should be Roman Catholics, and that Germans should be Protestants; and the mere act of becoming a Russian subject is not supposed to lay the Tartar, the Pole, or the German under any obligation to change his faith. These nationalities are therefore allowed the most perfect freedom in the exercise of their respective religions, so long as they refrain from disturbing by propagandism the divinely established order of things.

This is the received theory, and we must do the Russians the justice to say that they habitually act up to it. If the Government has sometimes

attempted to convert alien races, the motive has always been political, and the efforts have never awakened much sympathy among the people at large, or even among the clergy. In like manner the missionary societies which have sometimes been formed in imitation of the Western nations have never received much popular support. Thus with regard to aliens this peculiar theory has led to very extensive religious toleration. With regard to the Russians themselves the theory has had a very different effect. If in the nature of things the Tartar is a Mahometan, the Pole a Roman Catholic, and the German a Protestant, it is equally in the nature of things that the Russian should be a member of the Orthodox Church. On this point the written law and public opinion are in perfect accord. If an Orthodox Russian becomes a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, he is amenable to the criminal law, and is at the same time condemned by public opinion as an apostate and renegade—almost as a traitor.

As to the future of these heretical sects it is impossible to speak with confidence. The more gross and fantastic will probably disappear as primary education spreads among the people; but the Protestant sects seem to possess much more vitality. For the present, at least, they are rapidly spreading. I have seen large villages where, according to the testimony of the inhabitants, there was not a single heretic fifteen years before, and where one-half of the population had already become Molokánye; and this change, be it remarked, had taken place without any propagandist organisation. The civil and ecclesiastical authorities were well aware of the existence of the movement, but they were powerless to prevent it. The few efforts which they made were without effect, or worse than useless. Among the Stundisti

corporal punishment was tried as an antidote—without the concurrence, it is to be hoped, of the central authorities—and to the Molokánye of the province of Samára a learned monk was sent in the hope of converting them from their errors by reason and eloquence. What effect the birch-twigs had on the religious convictions of the Stundists I have not been able to ascertain, but I assume that they were not very efficacious, for according to the latest accounts the numbers of the sect are increasing. Of the mission in the province of Samára I happen to know more, and can state on the evidence of many peasants —some of them Orthodox—that the only immediate effect was to stir up religious fanaticism, and to induce a certain number of Orthodox to go over to the heretical camp.

In their public discussions the disputants could find no common ground on which to argue, for the simple reason that their fundamental conceptions were different. The monk spoke of the Church as the terrestrial representative of Christ and the sole possessor of truth, whilst his opponents knew nothing of a Church in this sense, and held simply that all men should live in accordance with the dictates of Scripture. Once the monk consented to argue with them on their own ground, and on that occasion he sustained a signal defeat, for he could not produce a single passage recommending the veneration of Icons—a practice which the Russian peasants consider an essential part of Orthodoxy. After this he always insisted on the authority of the early Œcümenical Councils and the Fathers of the Church —an authority which his antagonists did not recognise. Altogether the mission was a complete failure, and all parties regretted that it had been undertaken. "It was a great mistake," remarked to

me confidentially an Orthodox peasant—"a very great mistake! The Molokánye are a cunning people. The monk was no match for them; they knew the Scriptures a great deal better than he did. The Church should not condescend to discuss with heretics."

It is often said that these heretical sects are politically disaffected, and the Molokánye are thought to be specially dangerous in this respect. Perhaps there is a certain foundation for this opinion, for men are naturally disposed to doubt the legitimacy of a power that systematically persecutes them. With regard to the Molokánye, I believe the accusation to be a groundless calumny. Political ideas seemed entirely foreign to their modes of thought. During my intercourse with them I often heard them refer to the police as "wolves which have to be fed," but I never heard them speak of the Emperor otherwise than in terms of filial affection and veneration.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DISSENTERS.

Dissenters not to be confounded with Heretics—Extreme Importance attached to Ritual Observances—The Raskól, or Great Schism in the Seventeenth Century—Antichrist appears!—Policy of Peter the Great and Catherine II.—Present Ingenious Method of securing Religious Toleration—Internal Development of the Raskól—Schism among the Schismatics—The Old Ritualists—The Priestless People—Cooling of the Fanatical Enthusiasm and Formation of New Sects—Recent Policy of the Government towards the Sectarians—Numerical Force and Political Significance of Sectarianism.

We must be careful not to confound those heretical sects, Protestant and Fantastical, of which I have spoken in the preceding chapter, with the more numerous Dissenters or Schismatics, the descendants of those who seceded from the Russian Church—or more correctly from whom the Russian Church seceded—in the seventeenth century. So far from regarding themselves as heretics, these latter consider themselves more orthodox than the official Orthodox Church. They are conservatives, too, in the social as well as the religious sense of the term. Among them are to be found the last remnants of old Russian life, untinged by foreign influences.

The Russian Church, as I have already had occasion to remark, has always paid inordinate attention to ceremonial observances, and somewhat neglected the doctrinal and moral elements of the faith which it professes. This peculiarity greatly facilitated the spread of its influence among a people accustomed to pagan rites and magical incantations, but it had the pernicious effect of confirming in the new converts their superstitious belief in the virtue of mere ceremonies. Thus the Russians became zealous Christians

in all matters of external observance, without knowing much about the spiritual meaning of the rites which they practised. They looked upon the rites and sacraments as mysterious charms which preserved them from evil influences in the present life and secured them eternal felicity in the life to come, and they believed that these charms would inevitably lose their efficacy if modified in the slightest degree. Extreme importance was therefore attached to the ritual minutiæ, and the slightest modification of these minutiæ assumed the importance of an historical event. In the year 1476, for instance, the Novgorodian Chronicler gravely relates:—"This winter some philosophers (!) began to sing, 'O Lord, have mercy,' and others merely, 'Lord, have mercy.'" And this attaching of enormous importance to trifles was not confined to the ignorant multitude. An Archbishop of Novgorod declared solemnly that those who repeat the word "Alleluia" only twice at certain points in the liturgy "sing to their own damnation," and a celebrated Ecclesiastical Council, held in 1551, put such matters as the position of the fingers when making the sign of the cross on the same level as heresies — formally anathematising those who acted in such trifles contrary to its decisions.

This conservative spirit in religious concerns had a considerable influence on social life. As there was no clear line of demarcation between religious observances and simple traditional customs, the most ordinary act might receive a religious significance, and the slightest departure from a traditional custom might be looked upon as a deadly sin. A Russian of the olden time would have resisted the attempt to deprive him of his beard as strenuously as a Calvinist of the present day would resist the attempt to make

him abjure the doctrine of Predestination—and both for the same reason. As the doctrine of Predestination is for the Calvinist, so the wearing of a beard was for the old Russian—an essential of salvation. "Where," asked one of the Patriarchs of Moscow, "will those who shave their chins stand at the Last Day?—among the righteous adorned with beards, or among the beardless heretics?" The question required no answer.

In the seventeenth century this superstitious, conservative spirit reached its climax. The civil wars and foreign invasions, accompanied by pillage, famine, and plagues with which that century opened, produced a wide-spread conviction that the end of all things was at hand. The mysterious number of the Beast was found to indicate the year 1666, and timid souls began to discover signs of that falling away from the Faith which is spoken of in the Apocalypse. The majority of the people did not perhaps share this notion, but they believed that the sufferings with which they had been visited were a Divine punishment for having forsaken the ancient customs. And it could not be denied that considerable changes had taken place. Orthodox Russia was now tainted with the presence of heretics. Foreigners who shaved their chins and smoked the accursed weed had been allowed to settle in Moscow, and the Tsars not only held converse with them, but had even adopted some of their "pagan" practices. Besides this, the Government had introduced innovations and reforms, many of which were displeasing to the people. In short, the country was polluted with "heresy"—a subtle, evil influence lurking in everything foreign, and very dangerous to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Faithful—something of the nature of an epidemic, but infinitely more dangerous; for disease kills merely the

body, whereas "heresy" kills the soul, and causes both soul and body to be cast into hell-fire.

Had the Government introduced the innovations slowly and cautiously, respecting as far as possible all outward forms, it might have effected much without producing a religious panic; but, instead of acting circumspectly as the occasion demanded, it ran full-tilt against the ancient prejudices and superstitious fears, and drove the people into open resistance. When the art of printing was introduced, it became necessary to choose the best texts of the Liturgy, Psalter, and other religious books, and on examination it was found that, through the ignorance and carelessness of copyists, numerous errors had crept into the manuscripts in use. This discovery led to further investigation, which showed that certain irregularities had likewise crept into the ceremonial. The chief of the clerical errors lay in the orthography of the word "Jesus," and the chief irregularity in the ceremonial regarded the position of the fingers when making the sign of the cross.

To correct these errors, the celebrated Nikon, who was Patriarch in the time of Tsar Alexis, father of Peter the Great, ordered all the old liturgical books and the old Icons to be called in, and new ones to be distributed; but the clergy and the people resisted. Believing these "Nikonian novelties" to be heretical, they clung to their old Icons, their old missals and their old religious customs as the sole anchors of safety which could save the Faithful from drifting to perdition. In vain the Patriarch assured the people that the change was a return to the ancient forms still preserved in Greece and Constantinople. "The Greek Church," it was replied, "is no longer free from heresy: Orthodoxy has become many-coloured from the violence of the Turkish Mahomet; and the Greeks, under the sons of Hagar, have fallen away from the ancient traditions."

An anathema, formally pronounced by an Ecclesiastical Council against these Nonconformists, had no more effect than the admonitions of the Patriarch. They persevered in their obstinacy, and refused to believe that the blessed saints and holy martyrs who had used the ancient forms had not prayed and crossed themselves aright. "Not those holy men of old, but the present Patriarch and his counsellors must be heretics." "Woe to us! Woe to us!" cried the monks of Solovetsk when they received the new Liturgies. "What have you done with the Son of God? Give him back to us! You have changed Isus (the old Russian form of Jesus) into Iisus! It is fearful not only to commit such a sin, but even to think of it!" And the sturdy monks shut their gates, and defied Patriarch, Council, and Tsar for seven long years, till the monastery was taken by an armed force.

The decree of excommunication pronounced by the Ecclesiastical Council placed the Nonconformists beyond the pale of the Church, and the civil power undertook the task of persecuting them. Persecution had of course merely the effect of confirming the victims in their belief that the Church and the Tsar had become heretical. Thousands fled across the frontier and settled in the neighbouring countries—Poland, Prussia, Sweden, Austria, Turkey, the Caucasus, and Siberia. Others concealed themselves in the northern forests, and in the densely wooded region near the Polish frontier, where they lived by agriculture or fishing, and prayed, crossed themselves and buried their dead according to the customs of their forefathers. The northern forests were their favourite place of refuge. Hither flocked many of those who wished to keep themselves pure and undefiled. Here the more learned men among the Nonconformists—well ac-

quainted with Holy Writ, with fragmentary translations from the Greek Fathers, and with the more important decisions of the early Œcumenical Councils—wrote polemical and edifying works for the confounding of heretics and the confirming of true believers. Hence were sent out in all directions zealous missionaries, in the guise of traders, peddlers, and labourers, to sow what they called the living seed, and what the official Church termed "Satan's tares." When the Government agents discovered these retreats, the inmates generally fled from the "ravenous wolves"; but on more than one occasion a large number of fanatical men and women, shutting themselves up, set fire to their houses, and voluntarily perished in the flames. In Paleostrofski Monastery, for instance, in the year 1687, no less than 2,700 fanatics gained the crown of martyrdom in this way; and many similar instances are on record.* As in all periods of religious panic, the Apocalypse was carefully studied, and the Millennial ideas rapidly spread. The signs of the time were plain: Satan was being let loose for a little season. Men anxiously looked for the reappearance of Antichrist—and Antichrist appeared!

The man in whom the people recognised the incarnate spirit of evil was no other than Peter the Great.

From the Nonconformist point of view, Peter had very strong claims to be considered Antichrist. He had none of the staid, pious demeanour of the old Tsars, and showed no respect for many things which were venerated by the people. He ate, drank, and habitually associated with heretics, spoke their language,

* A list of well-authenticated cases is given by Nilski, "Semćinaya zhizn v russkom Raskólé," St. Petersburg, 1869, part I., pp. 55—57. The number of these self-immolators certainly amounted to many thousands.

wore their costume, chose from among them his most intimate friends, and favoured them more than his own people. Imagine the horror and commotion which would be produced among pious Catholics if the Pope should some day appear in the costume of the Grand Turk, and should choose Pashas as his chief counsellors! The horror which Peter's conduct produced among a large section of his subjects was not less great. They could not explain it otherwise than by supposing him to be the Devil in disguise, and they saw in all his important measures convincing proofs of his Satanic origin. The newly invented census, or "revision," was a profane "numbering of the people," and an attempt to enrol in the service of Beëlzebub those whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The new title of Imperator was explained to mean something very diabolical. The passport bearing the Imperial arms was the seal of Antichrist. The order to shave the beard was an attempt to disfigure "the image of God," after which man had been created, and by which Christ would recognise His own at the Last Day. The change in the calendar, by which New Year's Day was transferred from September to January, was the destruction of "the years of our Lord," and the introduction of the years of Satan in their place. Of the ingenious arguments by which these theses were supported, I may quote one by way of illustration. The world, it was explained, could not have been created in January as the new calendar seemed to indicate, because apples are not ripe at that season, and consequently Eve could not have been tempted in the way described!*

These ideas regarding Peter and his reforms were strongly confirmed by the vigorous persecutions which

* I found this ingenious argument in one of the polemical treatises of the Old Believers.

took place during the earlier years of his reign. The Nonconformists were constantly convicted of political disaffection—especially of "insulting the Imperial Majesty"—and were accordingly flogged, tortured, and beheaded without mercy. But when Peter had succeeded in putting down all armed opposition, and found that the movement was no longer dangerous for the throne, he adopted a policy more in accordance with his personal character. Whether he had himself any religious belief whatever, may be doubted; certainly he had not a spark of religious fanaticism in his nature. Exclusively occupied with secular concerns, he took no interest in subtle questions of religious ceremonial, and was profoundly indifferent as to how his subjects prayed and crossed themselves, provided they obeyed his orders in worldly matters and paid their taxes regularly. As soon, therefore, as political considerations admitted of clemency, he stopped the persecutions, and at last, in 1714, issued ukazes to the effect that all Dissenters might live unmolested, provided they inscribed themselves in the official registers and paid a double poll-tax. Somewhat later they were allowed to practise freely all their old rites and customs, on condition of paying certain fines.

With the accession of Catherine II., "the friend of philosophers," the *Raskól*,* as the schism had come to be called, entered on a new phase. Penetrated with the ideas of religious toleration then in fashion in Western Europe, Catherine abolished the disabilities to which the Raskólniks were subjected, and invited those of them who had fled across the frontier to return to their homes. Thousands accepted the invi-

* The term is derived from two Russian words—*ras*, asunder: and *kolot*, to split. Those who belong to the *Raskól* are called *Raskólniki*. They call themselves *Stáro-obriádtsi* (Old Ritualists) or *Starovéri* (Old Believers).

tation, and many who had hitherto sought to conceal themselves from the eyes of the authorities became rich and respected merchants. The peculiar semi-monastic religious communities, which had up till that time existed only in the forests of the northern and western provinces, began to appear in Moscow, and were officially recognised by the Administration. At first they took the form of hospitals for the sick, or asylums for the aged and infirm, but soon they became regular monasteries, the superiors of which exercised an undefined spiritual authority not only over the inmates, but also over the members of the sect throughout the length and breadth of the Empire.

From that time down to the present the Government has followed a wavering policy, oscillating between complete tolerance and active persecution. It must, however, be said that the persecution has never been of a very searching kind. In persecution, as in all other manifestations, the Russian Church directs its attention chiefly to external forms. It does not seek to ferret out heresy in a man's opinions, but complacently accepts as Orthodox all who annually appear at confession and communion, and who refrain from acts of open hostility. Those who can make these concessions to convenience are practically free from molestation, and those who cannot so trifle with their conscience have an equally convenient method of escaping persecution. The parish clergy, with their customary indifference to things spiritual and their traditional habit of regarding their functions from the financial point of view, are hostile to sectarianism, chiefly because it diminishes their revenues by diminishing the number of parishioners requiring their ministrations. This cause of hostility can easily be removed by a certain pecuniary sacrifice on the

part of the sectarians, and accordingly there generally exists between them and their parish priest a tacit contract, by which both parties are perfectly satisfied. The priest receives his income as if all his parishioners belonged to the State Church, and the parishioners are left in peace to believe and practise what they please. By this rude, convenient method a very large amount of toleration is effectually secured. Whether the practice has a beneficial moral influence on the parish clergy is, of course, an entirely different question.

When the priest has been satisfied, there still remains the police, which likewise levies an irregular tax on heterodoxy; but the negotiations are generally not difficult, for it is in the interest of both parties that they should come to terms and live in good-fellowship. Thus practically the *Raskólniki* live in the same condition as in the time of Peter: they pay a tax and are not molested—only the money paid does not now find its way into the Imperial Exchequer.

These external changes in the history of the *Raskól* have exercised a powerful influence on its internal development.

When formally anathematised and excluded from the dominant Church, the Nonconformists had neither a definite organisation nor a positive creed. The only tie that bound them together was hostility to the "Nikonian novelties," and all they desired was to preserve intact the beliefs and customs of their forefathers. At first they never thought of creating any permanent organisation. The more moderate believed that the Tsar would soon re-establish Orthodoxy, and the more fanatical imagined that the end of all things was at hand.* In either case they had

* Some had coffins made, and lay down in them at night, in the expectation that the Second Advent might take place before the morning.

only to suffer for a little season, keeping themselves free from the taint of heresy and from all contact with the kingdom of Antichrist.

But years passed, and neither of these expectations was fulfilled. The fanatics awaited in vain the sound of the last trump and the appearance of Christ, coming with His angels to judge the world. The sun continued to rise, and the seasons followed each other in their accustomed courses, but the end was not yet. Nor did the civil power return to the old faith. Nikon fell a victim to Court intrigues and his own overweening pride, and was formally deposed. Tsar Alexis in the fulness of time was gathered unto his fathers. But there was no sign of a re-establishment of the old Orthodoxy. Gradually the leading *Raskólniki* perceived that they must make preparations, not for the Day of Judgment, but for a terrestrial future—that they must create some permanent form of ecclesiastical organisation. In this work they encountered at the very outset not only practical but also theoretical difficulties.

So long as they confined themselves simply to resisting the official innovations, they seemed to be unanimous; but when they were forced to abandon this negative policy and to determine theoretically their new position, radical differences of opinion became apparent. All were convinced that the official Russian Church had become heretical, and that it had now Antichrist instead of Christ as its head; but it was not easy to determine what should be done by those who refused to bow the knee to the Son of Destruction. According to Protestant conceptions there was a very simple solution of the difficulty: the Nonconformists had simply to create a new Church for themselves, and worship God in the way that seemed good to them. But to the Russians of that time such notions

were still more repulsive than the innovations of Nikon. These men were Orthodox to the backbone—"plus royalistes que le roi"—and according to Orthodox conceptions the founding of a new Church is an absurdity. They believed that if the chain of historic continuity were once broken, the Church must necessarily cease to exist, in the same way as an ancient family becomes extinct when its sole representative dies without issue. If, therefore, the Church had already ceased to exist, there was no longer any means of communication between Christ and His people, the sacraments were no longer efficacious, and mankind was for ever deprived of the ordinary means of grace.

Now, on this important point there was a difference of opinion among the Dissenters. Some of them believed that, though the ecclesiastical authorities had become heretical, the Church still existed in the communion of those who had refused to accept the innovations. Others declared boldly that the Orthodox Church had ceased to exist, that the ancient means of grace had been withdrawn, and that those who had remained faithful must thenceforth seek salvation, not in the sacraments, but in prayer and such other religious exercises as did not require the co-operation of duly consecrated priests. Thus took place a schism among the Schismatics. The one party retained all the sacraments and ceremonial observances in the older form; the other refrained from the sacraments and from many of the ordinary rites, on the ground that there was no longer a real priesthood, and that consequently the sacraments could not be efficacious. The former party are termed *Stáro-obriádtsi*, or Old Ritualists; the latter are called *Bezpopoftsi*—that is to say, people "without priests" (*bez popóv*).

The succeeding history of these two sections of the

Nonconformists has been widely different. The Old Ritualists, being simply ecclesiastical Conservatives desirous of resisting all innovations, have remained a compact body little troubled by differences of opinion. The Priestless People, on the contrary, ever seeking to discover some new effectual means of salvation, have fallen into an endless number of independent sects.

The Old Ritualists had still, however, one important theoretical difficulty. At first they had amongst themselves plenty of consecrated priests for the celebration of the ordinances, but they had no means of renewing the supply. They had no bishops, and according to Orthodox belief the lower degrees of the clergy cannot be created without episcopal consecration. At the time of the schism one bishop had thrown in his lot with the Schismatics, but he had died shortly afterwards without leaving a successor, and thereafter no bishop had joined their ranks. As time wore on, the necessity of episcopal consecration came to be more and more felt, and it is not a little interesting to observe how these rigorists, who held to the letter of the law and declared themselves ready to die for a jot or a tittle, modified their theory in accordance with the changing exigencies of their position. When the priests who had kept themselves "pure and undefiled"—free from all contact with Antichrist—became scarce, it was discovered that certain priests of the dominant Church might be accepted if they formally abjured the Nikonian novelties. At first, however, only those who had been *consecrated* previous to the supposed apostasy of the Church were accepted, for the very good reason that consecration by bishops who had become heretical could not be efficacious. When these could no longer be obtained it was discovered that those who had been

baptised previous to the apostasy might be accepted; and when even these could no longer be found, a still further concession was made to necessity, and *all* consecrated priests were received on condition of their solemnly abjuring their errors. Of such priests there was always an abundant supply. If a regular priest could not find a parish, or if he was deposed by the authorities for some crime or misdemeanour, he had merely to pass over to the Old Ritualists, and was sure to find among them a hearty welcome and a tolerable salary.

By these concessions the indefinite prolongation of Old Ritualism was secured, but many of the Old Ritualists could not but feel that their position was, to say the least, extremely anomalous. They had no bishops of their own, and their priests were all consecrated by bishops whom they believed to be heretical! For many years they hoped to escape from this dilemma by discovering "Orthodox"—that is to say, Old Ritualist—bishops somewhere in the East; but when the East had been searched in vain, and all their efforts to obtain native bishops proved fruitless, they conceived the design of creating a bishopric somewhere beyond the frontier, among the Old Ritualists who had in times of persecution fled to Prussia, Austria, and Turkey. There were, however, immense difficulties in the way. In the first place it was necessary to obtain the formal permission of some foreign Government; and in the second place an Orthodox bishop must be found, willing to consecrate an Old Ritualist or to become an Old Ritualist himself. Again and again the attempt was made and failed; but at last, after years of effort and intrigue, the design was realised. In 1844 the Austrian Government gave permission to found a bishopric at Bêlaya Krinitsa, in Galicia, a few miles from the

Russian frontier; and two years later the deposed Metropolitan of Bosnia consented, after much hesitation, to pass over to the Old Ritualist confession and accept the diocese.* From that time the Old Ritualists have had their own bishops, and have not been obliged to accept the runaway priests of the official Church.

The Old Ritualists were naturally much grieved by the schism, and were often sorely tried by persecution, but they have always enjoyed a certain spiritual tranquillity, proceeding from the conviction that they have preserved for themselves the means of salvation. The position of the more extreme section of the Schismatics was much more tragical. They believed that the sacraments had irretrievably lost their efficacy, that the ordinary means of salvation were for ever withdrawn, that the powers of darkness had been let loose for a little season, that the authorities were the agents of Satan, and that the personage who filled the place of the old God-fearing Tsars was no other than Antichrist. Under the influence of these horrible ideas they fled to the woods and the caves to escape from the rage of the Beast, and to await the second coming of Our Lord.

This state of things could not continue permanently. Extreme religious fanaticism, like all other abnormal states, cannot long exist in a mass of human beings without some constant exciting cause. The vulgar necessities of everyday life, especially among people who have to live by the labour of their hands, have a wonderfully sobering influence on the excited brain, and must always, sooner or later, prove fatal to inordinate excitement. A few peculiarly

* An interesting account of these negotiations, and a most curious picture of the Orthodox ecclesiastical world in Constantinople, is given by Subbótiny, "Istoria Bêlokrinitskoi Ierarkhii," Moscow, 1874.

constituted individuals may show themselves capable of a lifelong enthusiasm, but the multitude is ever spasmodic in its fervour, and begins to slide back to its former apathy as soon as the exciting cause ceases to act.

All this we find exemplified in the history of the "Priestless People." When it was found that the world did not come to an end, and that the rigorous system of persecution was relaxed, the less excitable natures returned to their homes, and resumed their old mode of life; and when Peter the Great made his politic concessions, many who had declared him to be Antichrist came to suspect that he was really not so black as he was painted. This idea struck deep root in a religious community near Lake Onega (*Vuígovski Skit*), which had received special privileges on condition of supplying labourers for the neighbouring mines; and here was developed a new theory which opened up a way of reconciliation with the Government. By a more attentive study of Holy Writ and ancient books it was discovered that the reign of Antichrist would consist of two periods. In the former, the Son of Destruction would reign merely in the spiritual sense, and the Faithful would not be much molested; in the latter, he would reign visibly in the flesh, and true believers would be subjected to the most frightful persecution. The second period, it was held, had evidently not yet arrived, for the Faithful now enjoyed "a time of freedom, and not of compulsion or oppression." Whether this theory is strictly in accordance with Apocalyptic prophecy and Patristic theology may be doubted, but it fully satisfied those who had already arrived at the conclusion by a different road, and who sought merely a means of justifying their position. Certain it is that very many accepted it, and determined to render unto

Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, or, in secular language, to pray for the Tsar and to pay their taxes.

This ingenious compromise was not accepted by all the Priestless People. On the contrary, many of them regarded it as a woeful backsliding—a new device of the Evil One; and among these irreconcilables was a certain peasant called Theodosi, a man of little education, but of remarkable intellectual power and unusual strength of character. He raised anew the old fanaticism by his preaching and writings—widely circulated in manuscript—and succeeded in founding a new sect in the forest region near the Polish frontier.

The Priestless Nonconformists thus fell into two sections; the one, called *Pomórtsi*,* accepted at least a partial reconciliation with the civil power; the other, called Theodosians, after their founder, held to the old opinions, and refused to regard the Tsar otherwise than as Antichrist.

These latter were at first very wild in their fanaticism, but ere long they gave way to the influences which had softened the fanaticism of the Pomórtsi. Under the liberal, conciliatory rule of Catherine they lived in contentment, and many of them enriched themselves by trade. Their fanatical zeal and exclusiveness evaporated under the influence of material well-being and constant contact with the outer world, especially after they were allowed to build a monastery in Moscow. The Superior of this monastery, a man of much shrewdness and enormous wealth, succeeded in gaining the favour not only of the lower officials, who could be easily bought, but even of high-placed dignitaries, and for many years he exercised a very

* The word *Pomórtsi* means "those who live near the sea-shore." It is commonly applied to the inhabitants of the Northern provinces—that is, those who live near the shore of the White Sea, the only maritime frontier that Russia possessed previous to the conquests of Peter the Great.

real, if undefined, authority over all sections of the Priestless People. "His fame," it is said, "sounded throughout Moscow, and the echoes were heard in Petropol (St. Petersburg), Riga, Astrakhan, Nizhni-Novgorod, and other lands of piety"; and when deputies came to consult him, they prostrated themselves in his presence, as before the great ones of the earth. Living thus not only in peace and plenty, but even in honour and luxury, "the proud Patriarch of the Theodosian Church" could not consistently fulminate against "the ravenous wolves," with whom he was on friendly terms, or excite the fanaticism of his followers by highly coloured descriptions of "the awful sufferings and persecution of God's people in these latter days," as the founder of the sect had been wont to do. Though he could not openly abandon any fundamental doctrines, he allowed the ideas about the reign of Antichrist to fall into the background, and taught by example, if not by precept, that the Faithful might, by prudent concessions, live very comfortably in this present evil world. This seed fell upon soil already prepared for its reception. The Faithful gradually forgot their old savage fanaticism, and they have since contrived, while holding many of their old ideas in theory, to accommodate themselves in practice to the existing order of things.

The gradual softening and toning down of the original fanaticism in these two sects are strikingly exemplified in their ideas of marriage. According to Orthodox doctrine, marriage is a sacrament which can only be performed by a consecrated priest, and consequently for the Priestless People the celebration of marriage was an impossibility. In the first ages of sectarianism a state of celibacy was quite in accordance with their surroundings. Living in constant fear of their persecutors, and wandering from one

place of refuge to another, the sufferers for the Faith had little time or inclination to think of family ties, and readily listened to the monks, who exhorted them to mortify the lusts of the flesh. The result, however, proved that celibacy in the creed by no means ensures chastity in practice. Not only in the villages of the Dissenters, but even in those religious communities which professed a more ascetic mode of life, a numerous class of "orphans" began to appear, who knew not who their parents were; and this ignorance of blood-relationship naturally led to incestuous connections. Besides this, the doctrine of celibacy had grave practical inconveniences, for the peasant requires a housewife to attend to domestic concerns and to help him in his agricultural occupations. Thus the necessity of re-establishing family life came to be felt, and the feeling soon found expression in a doctrinal form both among the Pomórtsi and among the Theodosians. Learned dissertations were written, and disseminated in manuscript copies, violent discussions took place, and at last a great Council was held in Moscow to discuss the question.* The point at issue was never unanimously decided, but many accepted the ingenious arguments in favour of matrimony, and contracted marriages which were, of course, null and void in the eye of the law and of the Church, but valid in all other respects.

This new backsliding of the unstable multitude produced a new outburst of fanaticism among the stubborn few. Some of those who had hitherto sought to conceal the origin of the "orphan" class above referred to now boldly asserted that the existence of this class was a religious necessity, because in order

* I cannot here enter into the details of this remarkable controversy, but I may say that in studying it I have been frequently astonished by the dialectical power and logical subtlety displayed by the disputants, some of them simple peasants.

to be saved men must repent, and in order to repent men must sin! At the same time the old ideas about Antichrist were revived and preached with fervour by a peasant called Philip, who founded a new sect called the Philipists. This sect still exists. They hold fast to the old belief that the Tsar is Antichrist, and that the civil and ecclesiastical authorities are the servants of Satan—an idea that was kept alive by the corruption and extortion for which the Administration were notorious. They do not venture on open resistance to the authorities, but the bolder members take little pains to conceal their opinions and sentiments, and may be easily recognised by their severe aspect, their Puritanical manner, and their Pharisaical horror of everything which they suppose heretical and unclean. Some of them, it is said, carry this fastidiousness to such an extent that they throw away the handle of a door if it has been touched by a heretic!

It may seem that we have here reached the extreme limits of fanaticism, but in reality there were men whom even the Pharisaical Puritanism of the Philipists did not satisfy. These new zealots, who appeared in the time of Catherine II., but first became known to the official world in the reign of Nicholas I., rebuked the lukewarmness of their brethren, and founded a new sect in order to preserve intact the asceticism practised immediately after the schism. The sect still exists. They call themselves "Christ's People" (*Chṛistóviye Lyúdi*), but are better known under the popular names of "Wanderers" (*Stránniki*), or "Fugitives" (*Beguný*). Of all the sects they are the most hostile to the existing political and social organisation. Not content with condemning the military conscription, the payment of taxes, the acceptance of passports, and everything connected with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, they consider it sinful to live

peaceably among an Orthodox—that is, according to their belief, a heretical—population, and to have dealings with any who do not share their extreme views. Holding the Antichrist doctrine in its extreme form, they declare that Tsars are the vessels of Satan, that the Established Church is the dwelling-place of the Father of Lies, and that all who submit to the authorities are children of the Devil. According to this creed, those who wish to escape from the wrath to come must have neither houses nor fixed places of abode, must sever all ties that bind them to the world, and must wander about continually from place to place. True Christians are but strangers and pilgrims in the present life, and whoso binds himself to the world will perish with the world.

Such is the theory of these Wanderers, but among them, as among the less fanatical sects, practical necessities have produced concessions and compromises. As it is impossible to lead a nomadic life in Russian forests, the Wanderers have been compelled to admit into their ranks what may be called lay-brethren—men who nominally belong to the sect, but who live like ordinary mortals and have some rational way of gaining a livelihood. These latter live in the villages or towns, support themselves by agriculture or trade, accept passports from the authorities, pay their taxes regularly, and conduct themselves in all outward respects like loyal subjects. Their chief religious duty consists in giving food and shelter to their more zealous brethren, who have adopted a vagabond life in practice as well as in theory. It is only when they feel death approaching that they consider it necessary to separate themselves from the heretical world, and they effect this by having themselves carried out to some neighbouring wood—or into a garden if there is no wood at hand—where they may die in the open air.

Thus, we see, there is among the Russian Nonconformist sects what may be called a gradation of fanaticism, in which is reflected the history of the Great Schism. In the Wanderers we have the representatives of those who adopted and preserved the Antichrist doctrine in its extreme form—the successors of those who fled to the forests to escape from the rage of the Beast and to await the second coming of Christ. In the Philipists we have the representatives of those who adopted these ideas in a somewhat softer form, and who came to recognise the necessity of having some regular means of subsistence until the last trump should be heard. The Theodosians represent those who were in theory at one with the preceding category, but who, having less religious fanaticism, considered it necessary to yield to force and make peace with the Government without sacrificing their convictions. In the Pomórtsi we see those who preserved only the religious ideas of the schism, and became reconciled with the civil power. Lastly, we have the Old Ritualists, who differed from all the other sects in retaining the old ordinances, and who simply rejected the spiritual authority of the dominant Church. Besides these chief sections of the Nonconformists there are a great many minor denominations (*tólki*), differing from each other on minor points of doctrine. In certain districts, it is said, nearly every village has one or two independent sects. This is especially the case among the Don Cossacks and the Cossacks of the Ural, who are in part descendants of the men who fled from the early persecutions.

Of all the sects the Old Ritualists stand nearest to the official Church. They hold the same dogmas, practise the same rites, and differ only in trifling ceremonial matters, which few people consider essential. In the hope of inducing them to return to the official

fold the Government created at the beginning of last century special churches, in which they were allowed to retain their ceremonial peculiarities on condition of accepting regularly consecrated priests and submitting to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. As yet the design has not met with much success. The great majority of the Old Ritualists regard it as a trap, and assert that the Church in making this concession has been guilty of self-contradiction. "The Ecclesiastical Council of Moscow," they say, "anathematised our forefathers for holding to the old ritual, and declared that the whole course of nature would be changed sooner than the curse be withdrawn. The course of nature has not been changed, but the anathema has been cancelled." This argument ought to have a certain weight with those who believe in the infallibility of Ecclesiastical Councils.

Towards the Priestless People the Government has always acted in a much less conciliatory spirit. Its severity has been sometimes justified on the ground that sectarianism has had a political as well as a religious significance. A State like Russia cannot overlook the existence of sects which preach the duty of systematic resistance to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities and hold doctrines which lead to the grossest immorality. This argument, it must be admitted, is not without a certain force, but it seems to me that the policy adopted tended to increase rather than diminish the evils which it sought to cure. Instead of dispelling the absurd idea that the Tsar was Antichrist by a system of strict and even-handed justice, punishing merely actual crimes and delinquencies, the Government confirmed the notion in the minds of thousands by persecuting those who had committed no crime and who desired merely to worship God according to their conscience.

Above all it erred in opposing and punishing those marriages which, though legally irregular, were the best possible means of diminishing fanaticism, by leading back the fanatics to healthy social life. Fortunately these errors have now been abandoned. A policy of greater clemency and conciliation has been adopted, and has proved much more efficacious than persecution. The Dissenters have not returned to the official fold, but they have lost much of their old fanaticism and exclusiveness.

In respect of numbers the sectarians compose a very formidable body. Of Old Ritualists and Priestless People there are, it is said, no less than eleven millions; and the Protestant and Fantastical sects comprise probably about five millions more. If these numbers be correct, the sectarians constitute about an eighth of the whole population of the Empire. They count in their ranks none of the nobles—none of the so-called enlightened class—but they include in their number a respectable proportion of the peasants, a third of the rich merchant class, the majority of the Don Cossacks, and nearly all the Cossacks of the Ural.

Under these circumstances it is important to know how far the sectarians are politically disaffected. Some people imagine that in the event of an insurrection or a foreign invasion they might rise against the Government, whilst others believe that this supposed danger is purely imaginary. For my own part I agree with the latter opinion, which is strongly supported by the history of many important events, such as the French invasion in 1812, the Crimean War, and the last Polish insurrection. The great majority of the Schismatics and heretics are, I believe, loyal subjects of the Tsar. The more violent sects, which are alone capable of active

hostility against the authorities, are weak in numbers, and regard all outsiders with such profound mistrust that they are wholly impervious to inflammatory influences from without. Even if all the sects were capable of active hostility, they would not be nearly so formidable as their numbers seem to indicate, for they are hostile to each other, and are wholly incapable of combining for a common purpose.

Though sectarianism is thus by no means a serious political danger, it has nevertheless a considerable political significance. It proves satisfactorily that the Russian people is by no means so docile and pliable as is commonly supposed, and that it is capable of showing a stubborn, passive resistance to authority when it believes great interests to be at stake. The dogged energy which it has displayed in asserting for centuries its religious liberty may perhaps some day be employed in the arena of secular politics.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHURCH AND STATE.

The Russian Orthodox Church—Russia Outside of the Mediæval Papal Commonwealth—Influence of the Greek Church—Ecclesiastical History of Russia—Relations between Church and State—Eastern Orthodoxy and the Russian National Church—The Synod—Ecclesiastical Grumbling—Local Ecclesiastical Administration—The Black Clergy and the Monasteries—The Character of the Eastern Church reflected in the History of Religious Art—Practical Consequences—The Union Scheme.

FROM the curious world of heretics and Dissenters let us pass now to the Russian Orthodox Church, to which the great majority of the Russian people belong. It has played an important part in the national history, and has exercised a powerful influence in the formation of the national character.

Russians are in the habit of patriotically and proudly congratulating themselves on the fact that their forefathers always resisted successfully the aggressive tendencies of the Papacy, but it may be doubted whether, from a worldly point of view, the freedom from Papal authority has been an unmixed blessing for the country. If the Popes failed to realise their grand design of creating a vast European empire based on theocratic principles, they succeeded at least in inspiring with a feeling of brotherhood and a vague consciousness of common interest all the nations which acknowledged their spiritual supremacy. These nations, whilst remaining politically independent and frequently coming into hostile contact with each other, all looked to Rome as the capital of the Christian world, and to the Pope as the highest terrestrial authority. Though the Church did not

annihilate nationality, it made a wide breach in the political barriers, and formed a channel for international communication by which the social and intellectual progress of each nation became known to all the other members of the great Christian confederacy. Throughout the length and breadth of the Papal Commonwealth, educated men had a common language, a common literature, a common scientific method, and to a certain extent a common jurisprudence. Western Christendom was thus all through the Middle Ages not merely an abstract conception or a geographical expression: if not a political, it was at least a religious and intellectual unit, and all the countries of which it was composed benefited more or less by the connection.

For centuries Russia stood outside of this religious and intellectual confederation, for her Church connected her not with Rome, but with Constantinople, and Papal Europe looked upon her as belonging to the barbarous East. When the Mongol hosts swept over her plains, burnt her towns and villages, and finally incorporated her into the great empire of Genghis Khan, the so-called Christian world took no interest in the struggle except in so far as its own safety was threatened. And as time wore on, the barriers which separated the two great sections of Christendom became more and more formidable. The aggressive pretensions and ambitious schemes of the Vatican produced in the Greek Orthodox world a profound antipathy to the Roman Catholic Church and to Western influence of every kind. So strong was this aversion that when the nations of the West awakened in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from their intellectual lethargy and began to move forward on the path of intellectual and material progress, Russia not only remained unmoved, but looked on

the new civilisation with suspicion and fear as a thing heretical and accursed. We have here one of the chief reasons why Russia, at the present day, is in many respects less civilised than the nations of Western Europe.

But it is not merely in this negative way that the acceptance of Christianity from Constantinople has affected the fate of Russia. The Greek Church, whilst excluding Roman Catholic civilisation, exerted at the same time a powerful positive influence on the historical development of the nation.

The Church of the West inherited from old Rome something of that logical, juridical, administrative spirit which had created the Roman law, and something of that ambition and dogged, energetic perseverance that had formed nearly the whole known world into a great centralised empire. The Bishops of Rome early conceived the design of reconstructing that old empire on a new basis, and long strove to create a universal Christian theocratic State, in which kings and other civil authorities should be the subordinates of Christ's Vicar upon earth. The Eastern Church, on the contrary, has remained true to her Byzantine traditions, and has never dreamed of such lofty pretensions. Accustomed to lean on the civil power, she has always been content to play a secondary part, and has never strenuously resisted the formation of national churches.

For about two centuries after the introduction of Christianity — from 988 till 1240—Russia formed, ecclesiastically speaking, part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The metropolitans and the bishops were Greeks by birth and education, and the ecclesiastical administration was guided and controlled by the Byzantine Patriarchs. But from the time of the Mongol invasion, when the communications with

Constantinople became more difficult and educated native priests had become more numerous, this complete dependence on the Patriarch of Constantinople ceased. The Princes gradually arrogated to themselves the right of choosing the Metropolitan of Kief —who was at that time the chief ecclesiastical dignitary in Russia—and merely sent their nominees to Constantinople for consecration. About 1448 this formality came to be dispensed with, and the Metropolitan was commonly consecrated by a Council of Russian bishops. A further step in the direction of ecclesiastical autonomy was taken in 1589, when the Tsar succeeded in procuring the consecration of a Russian Patriarch, equal in dignity and authority to the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria.

In all matters of external form the Patriarch of Moscow was a very important personage. He exercised a certain influence in civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs, bore the official title of "Great Lord" (*Veliki Gosudár*), which had previously been reserved for the civil head of the State, and habitually received from the people scarcely less veneration than the Tsar himself. But in reality he possessed very little independent power. The Tsar was the real ruler in ecclesiastical as well as in civil affairs.*

The Russian Patriarchate came to an end in the time of Peter the Great. Peter wished, among other things, to reform the ecclesiastical administration, and

* As this is frequently denied by Russians, it may be well to quote one authority out of many that might be cited. Bishop Makarii, whose erudition and good faith are alike above suspicion, says of Dmitri of the Don: "He arrogated to himself full, unconditional power over the Head of the Russian Church, and through him over the whole Russian Church itself" ("Istóriya Rússkoi Tserkvi," V., p. 101). This is said of a Grand Prince who had strong rivals and had to treat the Church as an ally. When the Grand Princes became Tsars and had no longer any rivals, their power was certainly not diminished. Any further confirmation that may be required will be found in the Life of the famous Patriarch Nikon.

to introduce into his country many novelties which the majority of the clergy and of the people regarded as heretical; and he clearly perceived that a bigoted, energetic Patriarch might throw considerable obstacles in his way, and cause him infinite annoyance. Though such a Patriarch might be deposed without any flagrant violation of the canonical formalities, the operation would necessarily be attended with great trouble and loss of time. Peter was no friend of roundabout, tortuous methods, and preferred to remove the difficulty in his usual thorough, violent fashion. When the Patriarch Adrian died, the customary short interregnum was prolonged for twenty years, and when the people had thus become accustomed to having no Patriarch, it was announced that no more Patriarchs would be elected. Their place was supplied by an ecclesiastical council, or Synod, in which, as a contemporary explained, "the mainspring was Peter's power, and the pendulum his understanding." The great autocrat justly considered that such a Council could be much more easily managed than a stubborn Patriarch, and the wisdom of the measure has been duly appreciated by succeeding sovereigns. Though the idea of re-establishing the Patriarchate has more than once been raised, it has never been carried into execution. The Holy Synod remains the highest ecclesiastical authority.

But the Emperor? What is his relation to the Synod and to the Church in general?

This is a question about which zealous Orthodox Russians are extremely sensitive. If a foreigner ventures to hint in their presence that the Emperor seems to have a considerable influence in the Church, he may inadvertently produce a little outburst of patriotic warmth and virtuous indignation. The truth is that many Russians have a pet theory on this subject, and

have at the same time a dim consciousness that the theory is not quite in accordance with reality. They hold theoretically that the Orthodox Church has no "Head" but Christ, and is in some peculiar undefined sense entirely independent of all terrestrial authority. In this respect it is often contrasted with the Anglican Church, much to the disadvantage of the latter; and the supposed differences between the two are made a theme for semi-religious, semi-patriotic exultation. Khomiakóf, for instance, in one of his most vigorous poems, predicts that God will one day take the destiny of the world out of the hands of England in order to give it to Russia, and he adduces as one of the reasons for this transfer the fact that England "has chained, with sacrilegious hand, the Church of God to the pedestal of the vain earthly power." So far the theory. As to the facts, it is unquestionable that the Tsar exercises a much greater influence in ecclesiastical affairs than the King and Parliament in England. All who know the internal history of Russia are aware that the Government does not draw a clear line of distinction between the temporal and the spiritual, and that it occasionally uses the ecclesiastical organisation for political purposes.

What, then, are the relations between Church and State?

To avoid confusion, we must carefully distinguish between the Eastern Orthodox Church as a whole and that section of it which is known as the Russian Church.

The Eastern Orthodox Church* is, properly speaking, a confederation of independent churches without any central authority—a unity founded on the possession of a common dogma and on the theoretical but now unrealisable possibility of holding Œcumenical

* Or Greek Orthodox Church, as it is sometimes called.

Councils. The Russian National Church is one of the members of this ecclesiastical confederation. In matters of faith it is bound by the decisions of the ancient Œcumenical Councils, but in all other respects it enjoys complete independence and autonomy.

In relation to the Orthodox Church as a whole the Emperor of Russia is nothing more than a simple member, and can no more interfere with its dogmas or ceremonial than a King of Italy or an Emperor of the French could modify Roman Catholic theology; but in relation to the Russian National Church his position is peculiar. He is described in one of the fundamental laws as "the supreme defender and preserver of the dogmas of the dominant faith," and immediately afterwards it is said that "the autocratic power acts in the ecclesiastical administration by means of the most Holy Governing Synod, created by it."* This describes very fairly the relations between the Emperor and the Church. He is merely the defender of the dogmas, and cannot in the least modify them; but he is at the same time the chief administrator, and uses the Synod as an instrument.

Some ingenious people who wish to prove that the creation of the Synod was not an innovation represent the institution as a resuscitation of the ancient local councils; but this view is utterly untenable. The Synod is not a council of deputies from various sections of the Church, but a permanent college, or ecclesiastical senate, the members of which are appointed and dismissed by the Emperor as he thinks fit. It has no independent legislative authority, for its legislative projects do not become law till they have received the Imperial sanction; and they are always published, not in the name of the Church, but in the name of the Supreme Power. Even in matters

* Svod Zakonov I., §§ 42, 43.

of simple administration it is not independent, for all its resolutions require the consent of the Procureur, a layman nominated by his Majesty. In theory this functionary protests only against those resolutions which are not in accordance with the civil law of the country; but as he alone has the right to address the Emperor directly on ecclesiastical concerns, and as all communications between the Emperor and the Synod pass through his hands, he possesses in reality considerable power. Besides this, he can always influence the individual members by holding out prospects of advancement and decorations, and if this device fails, he can make the refractory members retire, and fill up their places with men of more pliant disposition. A Council constituted in this way cannot, of course, display much independence of thought or action, especially in a country like Russia, where no one ventures to oppose openly the Imperial will.

It must not, however, be supposed that the Russian ecclesiastics regard the Imperial authority with jealousy or dislike. They are all most loyal subjects, and warm adherents of autocracy. Those ideas of ecclesiastical independence which are so common in Western Europe, and that spirit of opposition to the civil power which animates the Roman Catholic clergy, are entirely foreign to their minds. If a bishop sometimes complains to an intimate friend that he has been brought to St. Petersburg and made a member of the Synod merely to append his signature to official papers and to give his consent to foregone conclusions, his displeasure is directed, not against the Emperor, but against the Procureur. He is full of loyalty and devotion to the Tsar, and has no desire to see his Majesty excluded from all influence in ecclesiastical affairs, but he feels saddened and humiliated when he finds that the whole government of the Church is

in the hands of a lay functionary, who may be a military man, and who looks at all matters from a layman's point of view.

This close connection between Church and State and the thoroughly national character of the Russian Church is well illustrated by the history of the local ecclesiastical administration. The civil and the ecclesiastical administration have always had the same character and have always been modified by the same influences. The terrorism which was largely used by the Muscovite Tsars and brought to a climax by Peter the Great appeared equally in both. In the episcopal circulars, as in the Imperial ukazes, we find frequent mention of "most cruel corporal punishment," "cruel punishment with whips, so that the delinquent and others may not acquire the habit of practising such insolence," and much more of the same kind. And these terribly severe measures were sometimes directed against very venial offences. The Bishop of Vologda, for instance, in 1748 decrees "cruel corporal punishment" against priests who wear coarse and ragged clothes,* and the records of the Consistorial courts contain abundant proof that such decrees were rigorously executed. When Catherine II. introduced a more humane spirit into the civil administration, corporal punishment was at once abolished in the Consistorial courts, and the procedure was modified according to the accepted maxims of civil jurisprudence. But I must not weary the reader with tiresome historical details. Suffice it to say that, from the time of Peter the Great downwards, the character of all the more energetic sovereigns is reflected in the history of the ecclesiastical administration.

Each province, or "government," forms a diocese,

* Známenski, "Prikhódskoe Dukhovénstvo v Rossíi so vrémeni reformy Petrá," Kazán, 1873.

and the bishop, like the civil governor, has a Council which theoretically controls his power, but practically has no controlling influence whatever. The Consistorial Council, which has in the theory of ecclesiastical procedure a very imposing appearance, is in reality the bishop's *chancellerie*, and its members are little more than secretaries, whose chief object is to make themselves agreeable to their superior. And it must be confessed that, so long as they remain what they are, the less power they possess the better it will be for those who have the misfortune to be under their jurisdiction. The higher dignitaries have at least larger aims and a certain consciousness of the dignity of their position; but the lower officials, who have no such healthy restraints and receive ridiculously small salaries, grossly misuse the little authority which they possess, and habitually pilfer and extort in the most shameless manner. The Consistories are, in fact, what the public offices were in the time of Nicholas I.

The higher ecclesiastical administration has always been in the hands of the monks, or "Black Clergy," as they are commonly termed, who form a large and influential class. The monks who first settled in Russia were, like those who first visited North-Western Europe, men of the earnest, ascetic, missionary type. Filled with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, they took little or no thought for the morrow, and devoutly believed that their Heavenly Father, without whose knowledge no sparrow falls to the ground, would provide for their humble wants. Poor, clad in rags, eating the most simple fare, and ever ready to share what they had with anyone poorer than themselves, they performed faithfully and earnestly the work which their Master had given them to do. But this ideal of monastic life soon gave way in Russia, as in the West, to practices

less simple and austere. By the liberal donations and bequests of the faithful the monasteries became rich in gold, in silver, in precious stones, and above all in land and serfs. Troitsa, for instance, possessed at one time 120,000 serfs and a proportionate amount of land, and it is said that at the beginning of the eighteenth century more than a fourth of the entire population had fallen under the jurisdiction of the Church. Many of the monasteries engaged in commerce, and the monks were, if we may credit Fletcher, who visited Russia in 1588, the most intelligent merchants of the country.

During the eighteenth century the Church lands were secularised, and the serfs of the Church became serfs of the State. This was a severe blow for the monasteries, but it did not prove fatal, as many people predicted. Some monasteries were abolished and others were reduced to extreme poverty, but many survived and prospered. These could no longer possess serfs, but they had still three sources of revenue: a limited amount of real property, Government subsidies, and the voluntary offerings of the faithful. At present there are about 500 monastic establishments, and the great majority of them, though not wealthy, have revenues more than sufficient to satisfy all the requirements of an ascetic life.

Thus in Russia, as in Western Europe, the history of monastic institutions is composed of three chapters, which may be briefly entitled: asceticism and missionary enterprise; wealth, luxury, and corruption; secularisation of property and decline. But between Eastern and Western monasticism there is at least one marked difference. The monasticism of the West made at various epochs of its history a vigorous, spontaneous effort at self-regeneration, which found

expression in the foundation of separate Orders, each of which proposed to itself some special aim—some special sphere of usefulness. In Russia we find no similar phenomenon. Here the monasteries never deviated from the rules of St. Basil, which restrict the members to religious ceremonies, prayer, and contemplation. From time to time a solitary individual raised his voice against the prevailing abuses, or retired from his monastery to spend the remainder of his days in ascetic solitude; but neither in the monastic population as a whole, nor in any particular monastery, do we find at any time a spontaneous, vigorous movement towards reform. During the last two hundred years reforms have certainly been effected, but they have all been the work of the civil power, and in the realisation of them the monks have shown little more than the virtue of resignation. Here, as elsewhere, we have evidence of that inertness, apathy, and want of spontaneous vigour which form one of the most characteristic traits of Russian national life. In this, as in other departments of national activity, the spring of action has lain not in the people, but in the Government.

It is only fair to the monks to state that in their dislike to progress and change of every kind they merely reflect the traditional spirit of the Church to which they belong. The Russian Church, like the Eastern Orthodox Church generally, is essentially conservative. Anything in the nature of a religious revival is foreign to her traditions and character. *Quieta non movere* is her fundamental principle of conduct. She prides herself on being above terrestrial influences.

The modifications that have been made in her administrative organisation have not affected her inner nature. In spirit and character she is now

what she was under the Patriarchs in the time of the Muscovite Tsars, holding fast to the promise that no jot or tittle shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled. To those who talk about the requirements of modern life and modern science she turns a deaf ear. Partly from the predominance which she gives to the ceremonial element, partly from the fact that her chief aim is to preserve unmodified the doctrine and ceremonial as determined by the early Œcumenical Councils, and partly from the low state of general culture among the clergy, she has ever remained outside of the intellectual movements. The attempts of the Roman Catholic Church to develop the traditional dogmas by definition and deduction, and the efforts of Protestants to reconcile their creeds with progressive science and the ever-varying intellectual currents of the time, are alike foreign to her nature. Hence she has produced no profound theological treatises conceived in a philosophical spirit, and has made no attempt to combat the spirit of infidelity in its modern forms. Profoundly convinced that her position is impregnable, she has "let the nations rave," and scarcely deigned to cast a glance at their intellectual and religious struggles. In a word, she is "in the world, but not of it."

If we wish to see represented in a visible form the peculiar characteristics of the Russian Church, we have only to glance at Russian religious art, and compare it with that of Western Europe. In the West, from the time of the Renaissance downwards, religious art has kept pace with artistic progress. Gradually it emancipated itself from archaic forms and childish symbolism, converted the lifeless typical figures into living individuals, lit up their dull eyes and expressionless faces with human intelligence and

human feeling, and finally aimed at archæological accuracy in costume and other details. Thus in the West the Icon grew slowly into the naturalistic portrait, and the rude symbolical groups developed gradually into highly finished historical pictures. In Russia the history of religious art has been entirely different. Instead of distinctive schools of painting and great religious artists, there has been merely an anonymous traditional craft, destitute of any artistic individuality. In all the productions of this craft the old Byzantine forms have been faithfully and rigorously preserved, and we can see reflected in the modern Icons—stiff, archaic, expressionless—the immobility of the Eastern Church in general, and of the Russian Church in particular.

To the Roman Catholic, who struggles against science as soon as it contradicts traditional conceptions, and to the Protestant, who strives to bring his religious beliefs into accordance with his scientific knowledge, the Russian Church may seem to resemble an antediluvian petrifaction, or a cumbrous line-of-battle ship that has been long stranded. It must be confessed, however, that the serene inactivity for which she is distinguished has had very valuable practical consequences. The Russian clergy have neither that haughty, aggressive intolerance which characterises their Roman Catholic brethren, nor that bitter, uncharitable, sectarian spirit which is too often to be found among Protestants. They allow not only to heretics, but also to members of their own communion, the most complete intellectual freedom, and never think of anathematising anyone for his scientific or unscientific opinions. All that they demand is that those who have been born within the pale of Orthodoxy should show the Church a certain nominal allegiance; and in this matter of allegiance they are

by no means very exacting. So long as a member refrains from openly attacking the Church and from going over to another confession, he may entirely neglect all religious ordinances and publicly profess scientific theories logically inconsistent with any kind of dogmatic religious belief, without the slightest danger of incurring ecclesiastical censure.

This apathetic tolerance may be partly explained by the national character, but it is also to some extent due to the peculiar relations between Church and State. The Government vigilantly protects the Church from attack, and at the same time prevents her from attacking her enemies. Hence religious questions are never discussed in the Press, and the ecclesiastical literature is all historical, homiletic, or devotional. The authorities allow public oral discussions to be held during Lent in the Kremlin of Moscow between members of the State Church and Old Ritualists; but these debates are not theological in our sense of the term. They turn exclusively on details of Church History, and on the minutiæ of ceremonial observance.

A few years ago there was a good deal of vague talk about a possible union of the Russian and Anglican Churches. If by "union" is meant simply union in the bonds of brotherly love, there can be, of course, no objection to any amount of such *pia desideria;* but if anything more real and practical is intended, the project is an absurdity. A real union of the Russian and Anglican Churches would be as difficult of realisation, and is as undesirable, as a union of the Russian Council of State and the British House of Commons.*

* I suppose that the more serious partisans of the union scheme mean union with the Eastern Orthodox, and not with the Russian, Church. To them the above remarks are not addressed. Their scheme is, in my opinion, unrealisable and undesirable, but it contains nothing absurd.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NOBLESSE.

The Nobles in Early Times—The Mongol Domination—The Tsardom of Muscovy—Family Dignity—Reforms of Peter the Great—The Nobles adopt West-European Conceptions—Abolition of Obligatory Service—Influence of Catherine II.—The Russian Dvoryánstvo compared with the French Noblesse and the English Aristocracy—Russian Titles—Probable Future of the Russian Noblesse.

HITHERTO I have been compelling the reader to move about among what we should call the lower classes—peasants, burghers, traders, parish priests, Dissenters, heretics, Cossacks, and the like—and he feels perhaps inclined to complain that he has had no opportunity of mixing with what old-fashioned people call gentlefolk and persons of quality. By way of making amends to him for this reprehensible conduct on my part, I propose now to present him to the whole Noblesse* in a body, not only those at present living, but also their near and distant ancestors, right back to the foundation of the Russian Empire a thousand years ago. Thereafter I shall introduce him to some of the County Families and invite him to make with me a few country-house visits.

In the old times, when Russia was merely a collection of some seventy independent principalities, each reigning prince was surrounded by a group of armed men, composed partly of *Boyárs*, or large landed proprietors, and partly of knights, or soldiers

* I use here a foreign, in preference to an English, term, because the word "Nobility" would convey a false impression. Etymologically the Russian word *Dvoryanin* means a Courtier (from *Dvor* = court); but this term is equally objectionable, because the great majority of the *Dvoryánstvo* have nothing to do with the Court.

of fortune. These men, who formed the Noblesse of the time, were to a certain extent under the authority of the Prince, but they were by no means mere obedient, silent executors of his will. The *Boyárs* might refuse to take part in his military expeditions, and the "free-lances" might leave his service and seek employment elsewhere. If he wished to go to war without their consent, they could say to him, as they did on one occasion, "You have planned this yourself, Prince, so we will not go with you, for we knew nothing of it." Nor was this resistance to the princely will always merely passive. Once, in the principality of Galitch, the armed men seized their prince, killed his favourites, burned his mistress, and made him swear that he would in future live with his lawful wife. To his successor, who had married the wife of a priest, they spoke thus: "We have not risen against *you*, Prince, but we will not do reverence to a priest's wife: we will put her to death, and then you may marry whom you please." Even the energetic Bogolubski, one of the most remarkable of the old princes, did not succeed in having his own way. When he attempted to force the *Boyárs* he met with stubborn opposition, and was finally assassinated. From these incidents, which might be indefinitely multiplied from the old chronicles, we see that in the early period of Russian history the *Boyárs* and knights were a body of free men, possessing a considerable amount of political power.

Under the Mongol domination this political equilibrium was destroyed. When the country had been conquered, the princes became servile vassals of the Khan, and arbitrary rulers towards their own subjects. The political significance of the nobles was thereby greatly diminished. It was not, however, by any means annihilated. Though the prince no longer

depended entirely on their support, he had an interest in retaining their services, to protect his territory in case of sudden attack, or to increase his possessions at the expense of his neighbours when a convenient opportunity presented itself. Theoretically, such conquests were impossible, for all removing of the ancient landmarks depended on the decision of the Khan; but in reality the Khan paid little attention to the affairs of his vassals, so long as the tribute was regularly paid; and much took place in Russia without his permission. We find, therefore, in some of the principalities the old relations still subsisting under Mongol rule. The famous Dmitri of the Don, for instance, when on his death-bed, speaks thus to his *Boyárs:* "You know my habits and my character; I was born among you, grew up among you, governed with you—fighting by your side, showing you honour and love, and placing you over towns and districts. I loved your children, and did evil to no one. I rejoiced with you in your joy, mourned with you in your grief, and called you the princes of my land." Then, turning to his children, he adds, as a parting advice: "Love your Boyárs, my children; show them the honour which their services merit, and undertake nothing without their consent."

When the Grand Princes of Moscow brought the other principalities under their power, and formed them into the Tsardom of Muscovy, the nobles descended another step in the political scale. So long as there were many principalities they could quit the service of a prince as soon as he gave them reason to be discontented, knowing that they would be well received by one of his rivals; but now they had no longer any choice. The only rival of Moscow was Lithuania, and precautions were taken to prevent the discontented from crossing the Lithuanian frontier.

The nobles were no longer voluntary adherents of a prince, but had become subjects of a Tsar; and the Tsars were not as the old princes had been. By a violent legal fiction they conceived themselves to be the successors of the Byzantine Emperors, and created a new court ceremonial, borrowed partly from Constantinople and partly from the Mongol Horde. They no longer associated familiarly with the *Boyárs*, and no longer asked their advice, but treated them rather as menials. When the nobles entered their august master's presence they prostrated themselves in Oriental fashion—occasionally as many as thirty times—and when they incurred his displeasure they were summarily flogged or executed, according to the Tsar's good pleasure. In succeeding to the power of the Khans, the Tsars had adopted, we see, a good deal of the Mongol system of government.

It may seem strange that a class of men, which had formerly shown a proud spirit of independence, should have submitted quietly to such humiliation and oppression without making a serious effort to curb the new power, which had no longer a Tartar Horde at its back to quell opposition. But we must remember that the nobles, as well as the princes, had passed in the meantime through the school of the Mongol domination. In the course of two centuries they had gradually become accustomed to despotic rule in the Oriental sense. If they felt their position humiliating and irksome, they must have felt, too, how difficult it was to better it. Their only resource lay in combining against the common oppressor; and we have only to glance at the motley, disorganised group, as they cluster round the Tsar, to perceive that combination was extremely difficult. We can distinguish there the mediatised princes, still harbouring designs for the recovery of their independence; the Moscow *Boyárs*,

jealous of their family honour and proud of Muscovite supremacy; Tartar *Murzi*, who have submitted to be baptised and have received land like the other nobles; the Novgorodian magnate, who cannot forget the ancient glory of his native city; Lithuanian nobles, who find it more profitable to serve the Tsar than their own sovereign; petty chiefs who have fled from the oppression of the Teutonic order; and soldiers of fortune from every part of Russia. Strong, permanent political factors are not easily formed out of such heterogeneous material.

At the end of the sixteenth century the old dynasty became extinct, and after a short period of political anarchy, commonly called "the troublous times" (*smútnoe vrêmya*), the Románof family were raised to the throne by the will of the people, or at least by those who were assumed to be its representatives. By this change the Noblesse acquired a somewhat better position. They were no longer exposed to capricious tyranny and barbarous cruelty, such as they had experienced at the hands of Ivan the Terrible, but they did not, as a class, gain any political influence. There were still rival families and rival factions, but there were no political parties in the proper sense of the term, and the highest aim of families and factions was to gain the favour of the Tsar.

The frequent quarrels about precedence which took place among the rival families at this period form one of the most curious episodes of Russian history. The old patriarchal conception of the family as a unit one and indivisible was still so strong among these men that the elevation or degradation of one member of a family was considered to affect deeply the honour of all the other members. Each noble family had its rank in a recognised scale of dignity, according to the

rank which it held, or had previously held, in the Tsar's service; and a whole family would have considered itself dishonoured if one of its members accepted a post lower than that to which he was entitled. Whenever a vacant place in the service was filled up, the subordinates of the successful candidate examined the official records and the genealogical trees of their families, in order to discover whether some ancestor of their new superior had not served under one of their own ancestors. If the subordinate found such a case, he complained to the Tsar that it was not becoming for him to serve under a man who had less family honour than himself.

Unfounded complaints of this kind often entailed imprisonment or corporal punishment, but in spite of this the quarrels for precedence were very frequent. At the commencement of a campaign many such disputes were sure to arise, and the Tsar's decision was not always accepted by the party who considered himself aggrieved. I have met at least with one example of a great dignitary voluntarily mutilating his hand in order to escape the necessity of serving under a man whom he considered his inferior in family dignity. Even at the Tsar's table these rivalries sometimes produced unseemly incidents, for it was almost impossible to arrange the places so as to satisfy all the guests. In one recorded instance a noble who received a place lower than that to which he considered himself entitled openly declared to the Tsar that he would rather be condemned to death than submit to such an indignity. In another instance of a similar kind the refractory guest was put on his chair by force, but saved his family honour by slipping under the table!

The next transformation of the Noblesse was effected by Peter the Great. Peter was by nature

and position an autocrat, and could brook no opposition. Having set before himself a great aim, he sought everywhere obedient, intelligent, energetic instruments to carry out his designs. He himself served the State zealously—as a common artisan, when he considered it necessary—and he insisted on all his subjects doing likewise, under pain of merciless punishment. To noble birth and long pedigrees he habitually showed a most democratic, or rather autocratic, indifference. Intent on obtaining the service of living men, he paid no attention to the claims of dead ancestors, and gave to his servants the pay and honour which their services merited, irrespectively of birth or social position. Hence many of his chief coadjutors had no connection with the old Russian families. Count Yaguzhinski, who long held one of the most important posts in the State, was the son of a poor sacristan; Count Devier was a Portuguese by birth, and had been a cabin-boy; Baron Shafirof was a Jew; Hannibal, who died with the rank of Commander-in-Chief, was a negro who had been bought in Constantinople; and his Serene Highness Prince Ménshikof had begun life, it was said, as a baker's apprentice! For the future, noble birth was to count for nothing. The service of the State was thrown open to men of all ranks, and personal merit was to be the only claim to promotion.

This must have seemed to the Conservatives of the time a most revolutionary and reprehensible proceeding, but it did not satisfy the reforming tendencies of the great autocrat. He went a step further, and entirely changed the legal status of the Noblesse. Down to his time the nobles were free to serve or not as they chose, and those who chose to serve enjoyed land on what we should call a feudal tenure. Some served permanently in the military or civil administra-

tion, but by far the greater number lived on their estates, and entered the active service merely when the militia was called out in view of war. This system was completely changed when Peter created a large standing army and a great centralised bureaucracy. By one of those "fell swoops" which periodically occur in Russian history, he changed the feudal into freehold tenures, and laid down the principle that all nobles, whatever their landed possessions might be, should serve the State in the Army, the Fleet, or the civil administration, from boyhood to old age. In accordance with this principle, any noble who refused to serve was not only deprived of his estate, as in the old times, but was declared to be a traitor and might be condemned to capital punishment.

The nobles were thus transformed into servants of the State, and the State in the time of Peter was a hard taskmaster. They complained bitterly, and with reason, that they had been deprived of their ancient rights, and were compelled to accept quietly and uncomplainingly whatever burdens their master chose to place upon them. "Though our country," they said, "is in no danger of invasion, no sooner is peace concluded than plans are laid for a new war, which has generally no other foundation than the ambition of the Sovereign, or perhaps merely the ambition of one of his Ministers. To please him our peasants are utterly exhausted, and we ourselves are forced to leave our homes and families, not as formerly for a single campaign, but for long years. We are compelled to contract debts and to entrust our estates to thieving overseers, who commonly reduce them to such a condition that when we are allowed to retire from the service, in consequence of old age or illness, we cannot to the end of our lives retrieve our

prosperity. In a word, we are so exhausted and ruined by the keeping up of a standing army, and by the consequences flowing therefrom, that the most cruel enemy, though he should devastate the whole Empire, could not cause us one-half of the injury."*

This Spartan *régime*, which ruthlessly sacrificed private interests to considerations of State policy, could not long be maintained in its pristine severity. It undermined its own foundations by demanding too much. Draconian laws threatening confiscation and capital punishment were of little avail. Nobles became monks, inscribed themselves as merchants, or engaged themselves as domestic servants, in order to escape their obligations. "Some," says a contemporary, "grow old in disobedience and have never once appeared in active service. . . . There is, for instance, Theodore Mokeyef. . . . In spite of the strict orders sent regarding him no one could ever catch him. Some of those sent to take him he belaboured with blows, and when he could not beat the messengers, he pretended to be dangerously ill, or feigned idiocy, and, running into the pond, stood in the water up to his neck; but as soon as the messengers were out of sight he returned home and roared like a lion." †

After Peter's death the system was gradually relaxed, but the Noblesse could not be satisfied by partial concessions. Russia had in the meantime moved, as it were, out of Asia into Europe, and had become one of the great European Powers. The upper classes had been gradually learning something of the fashions, the literature, the institutions, and the moral conceptions of Western Europe, and the nobles

* These complaints have been preserved by Vockerodt, a Prussian diplomatic agent of the time.

† Posóshkof, "O skúdosti i bogátstvê."

naturally compared the class to which they belonged with the aristocracies of Germany and France. For those who were influenced by the new foreign ideas the comparison was humiliating. In the West the Noblesse was a free and privileged class, proud of its liberty, its rights, and its culture; whereas in Russia the nobles were servants of the State, without privileges, without dignity, subject to corporal punishment, and burdened with onerous duties from which there was no escape. Thus arose in that section of the Noblesse which had some acquaintance with Western civilisation a feeling of discontent, and a desire to gain a social position similar to that of the nobles in France and Germany. These aspirations were in part realised by Peter III., who, in 1762, abolished the principle of obligatory service. His consort, Catherine II., went much further in the same direction, and inaugurated a new epoch in the history of the *Dvoryánstvo*, a period in which its duties and obligations fell into the background, and its rights and privileges came to the front.

Catherine had good reason to favour the Noblesse. As a foreigner and a usurper, raised to the throne by a Court conspiracy, she could not awaken in the masses that semi-religious veneration which the legitimate Tsars have always enjoyed, and consequently she had to seek support in the upper classes, who were less rigid and uncompromising in their conceptions of legitimacy. She confirmed, therefore, the ukaz which abolished obligatory service of the nobles, and sought to gain their voluntary service by honours and rewards. In her manifestoes she always spoke of them in the most flattering terms, and tried to convince them that the welfare of the country depended on their loyalty and devotion. Though she had no intention of ceding any of her political power, she formed the nobles of

each province into a corporation, with periodical assemblies, which were supposed to resemble the French Provincial Parliaments, and entrusted to each of these corporations a large part of the local administration. By these and similar means, aided by her masculine energy and feminine tact, she made herself very popular, and completely changed the old conceptions about the public service. Formerly service had been looked on as a burden; now it came to be looked on as a privilege. Thousands who had retired to their estates after the publication of the liberation edict now flocked back and sought appointments, and this tendency was greatly increased by the brilliant campaigns against the Turks, which excited the patriotic feelings and gave plentiful opportunities of promotion. "Not only landed proprietors," it is said in a comedy of the time,* "but all men, even shopkeepers and cobblers, aim at becoming officers, and the man who has passed his whole life without official rank seems to be not a human being."

And Catherine did more than this. She shared the idea—generally accepted throughout Europe since the brilliant reign of Louis XIV.—that a refined, pomp-loving, pleasure-seeking Court Noblesse was not only the best bulwark of Monarchy, but also a necessary ornament of every highly civilised State; and as she ardently desired that her country should have the reputation of being highly civilised, she strove to create this national ornament. The love of French civilisation, which already existed among the upper classes of her subjects, here came to her aid, and her efforts in this direction were singularly successful. The Court of St. Petersburg became almost as brilliant, as *galant*, and as frivolous as the Court of Versailles. All who aimed at high honours adopted

* Knyazhnina, "Khvastún."

French fashions, spoke the French language, and affected an unqualified admiration for French classical literature. The Courtiers talked of the *point d'honneur*, discussed the question as to what was consistent with the dignity of a noble, sought to display "that chivalrous spirit which constitutes the pride and ornament of France," and looked back with horror on the humiliating position of their fathers and grandfathers. "Peter the Great," writes one of them, "beat all who surrounded him, without distinction of family or rank; but now, many of us would certainly prefer capital punishment to being beaten or flogged, even though the castigation were applied by the sacred hands of the Lord's Anointed."

The tone which reigned in the Court circle of St. Petersburg spread gradually towards the lower ranks of the *Dvoryánstvo*, and it seemed to superficial observers that a very fair imitation of the French Noblesse had been produced; but in reality the copy was very unlike the model. The Russian *Dvoryanín* easily learned the language and assumed the manners of the French *gentilhomme*, and succeeded in changing his physical and intellectual exterior; but all those deeper and more delicate parts of human nature which are formed by the accumulated experience of past generations could not be so easily and rapidly changed. The French *gentilhomme* of the eighteenth century was the direct descendant of the feudal baron, with the fundamental conceptions of his ancestors deeply embedded in his nature. He had not, indeed, the old haughty bearing towards the Sovereign, and his language was tinged with the fashionable democratic philosophy of the time; but he possessed a large intellectual and moral inheritance that had come down to him directly from the palmy days of feudalism—an inheritance which even the Great

Revolution, which was then preparing, could not annihilate. The Russian noble, on the contrary, had received from his ancestors entirely different traditions. His father and grandfather had been conscious of the burdens rather than the privileges of the class to which they belonged. They had considered it no disgrace to receive corporal punishment, and had been jealous of their honour, not as gentlemen or descendants of *Boyárs*, but as Brigadiers, College Assessors, or Privy Counsellors. Their dignity had rested not on the grace of God, but on the will of the Tsar. Under these circumstances even the proudest magnate of Catherine's Court, though he might speak French as fluently as his mother tongue, could not be very deeply penetrated with the conception of noble blood, the sacred character of nobility, and the numerous feudal ideas interwoven with these conceptions. And in adopting the outward forms of a foreign culture the nobles did not, it seems, gain much in true dignity. "The old pride of the nobles has fallen!" exclaims one who had more genuine aristocratic feeling than his fellows.* "There are no longer any honourable families, but merely official rank and personal merits. All seek official rank, and as all cannot render direct services, distinctions are sought by every possible means—by flattering the Monarch and toadying the important personages." There was considerable truth in this complaint, but the voice of this solitary aristocrat was as of one crying in the wilderness. The whole of the educated classes—men of old family and *parvenus* alike —were, with few exceptions, too much engrossed with place-hunting to attend to such sentimental wailing.

If the Russian Noblesse was thus in its new form

* Prince Shtcherbátof.

but a very imperfect imitation of its French model, it was still more unlike the English aristocracy. Notwithstanding the liberal phrases in which Catherine habitually indulged, she never had the least intention of ceding one jot or tittle of her autocratic power, and the Noblesse as a class never obtained even a shadow of political influence. There was no real independence under the new airs of dignity and hauteur. In all their acts and openly expressed opinions the courtiers were guided by the real or supposed wishes of the Sovereign, and much of their political sagacity was employed in endeavouring to discover what would please her. "People never talk politics in the salons," says a contemporary witness,* "not even to praise the Government. Fear has produced habits of prudence, and the Frondeurs of the Capital express their opinions only in the confidence of intimate friendship or in a relationship still more confidential. Those who cannot bear this constraint retire to Moscow, which cannot be called the centre of opposition, for there is no such thing as opposition in a country with an autocratic Government, but which is the capital of the discontented." And even there the discontent did not venture to show itself in the Imperial presence. "In Moscow," says another witness, accustomed to the obsequiousness of Versailles, "you might believe yourself to be among republicans who have just thrown off the yoke of a tyrant, but as soon as the Court arrives you see nothing but abject slaves."†

Though thus excluded from direct influence in political affairs, the Noblesse might still have acquired a certain political significance in the State, by means of the Provincial Assemblies, and by the part they

* Ségur, long Ambassador of France at the Court of Catherine.

† Sabathier de Cabres, "Catherine II. et la Cour de Russie en 1772."

took in local administration; but in reality they had neither the requisite political experience nor the requisite patience, nor even the desire to pursue such a policy. The majority of the proprietors preferred the chances of promotion in the Imperial service to the tranquil life of a country gentleman; and those who resided permanently on their estates showed indifference or positive antipathy to everything connected with the local administration. What was officially described as "a privilege conferred on the nobles for their fidelity, and for the generous sacrifice of their lives in their country's cause," was regarded by those who enjoyed it as a new kind of obligatory service—an obligation to supply judges and officers of rural police.

If we require any additional proof that the nobles amidst all these changes were still as dependent as ever on the arbitrary will or caprice of the Monarch, we have only to glance at their position in the time of Paul I., the capricious, eccentric, violent son and successor of Catherine. The autobiographical memoirs of the time depict in vivid colours the humiliating position of even the leading men in the State, in constant fear of exciting by act, word, or look the wrath of the Sovereign. As we read these contemporary records we seem to have before us a picture of ancient Rome under the most despotic and capricious of her Emperors. Irritated and embittered before his accession to the throne by the haughty demeanour of his mother's favourites, Paul lost no opportunity of showing his contempt for aristocratic pretensions, and of humiliating those who were supposed to harbour them. "Apprenez, Monsieur," he said angrily on one occasion to Dumouriez, who had accidentally referred to one of the "considerable" personages of the Court, "Apprenez qu'il n'y a pas de considérable ici, que la

personne à laquelle je parle et pendant le temps que je lui parle!"*

From the time of Catherine down to the succession of Alexander II. in 1855 no important change was made in the legal status of the Noblesse, but a gradual change took place in its social character by the continual influx of Western ideas and Western culture. The exclusively French culture in vogue at the Court of Catherine assumed a more cosmopolitan colouring, and permeated downwards till all who had any pretensions to being *civilisés* spoke French with tolerable fluency and possessed at least a superficial acquaintance with the literature of Western Europe. What chiefly distinguished them in the eye of the law from the other classes was the privilege of possessing "inhabited estates"—that is to say, estates with serfs. By the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 this valuable privilege was abolished, and about one-half of their landed property passed into the hands of the peasantry. By the administrative reforms which have since taken place, any little significance which the provincial corporations may have possessed has been annihilated. Thus at the present day the nobles are on a level with the other classes with regard to the right of possessing landed property and the administration of local affairs.

From this rapid sketch the reader will easily perceive that the Russian Noblesse has had a peculiar historical development. In Germany, France, and England the nobles were early formed into a homogeneous organised body by the political conditions in which they were placed. They had to repel the encroaching tendencies of the Monarchy on the one hand, and of the *bourgeoisie* on the other; and in

* This saying is often falsely attributed to Nicholas I. The anecdote is related by Ségur.

this long struggle with powerful rivals they instinctively held together and developed a vigorous *esprit de corps*. New members penetrated into their ranks, but these intruders were so few in number that they were rapidly assimilated without modifying the general character or recognised ideals of the class, and without rudely disturbing the fiction of purity of blood. The class thus assumed more and more the nature of a caste with a peculiar intellectual and moral culture, and stoutly defended its position and privileges till the ever-increasing power of the middle classes undermined its influence. Its fate in different countries has been different. In Germany it clung to its feudal traditions, and still preserves its social exclusiveness. In France it was deprived of its political influence by the Monarchy and crushed by the Revolution. In England it moderated its pretensions, allied itself with the middle classes, created under the disguise of constitutional monarchy an aristocratic republic, and conceded inch by inch, as necessity demanded, a share of its political influence to the ally that had helped it to curb the Royal power. Thus the German baron, the French *gentilhomme*, and the English nobleman represent three distinct, well-marked types; but amidst all their diversities they have much in common. They have all preserved to a greater or less extent a haughty consciousness of innate inextinguishable superiority over the lower orders, together with a more or less carefully disguised dislike for the class which has been, and still is, an aggressive rival.

The Russian Noblesse has not these characteristics. It was formed out of more heterogeneous materials, and these materials did not spontaneously combine to form an organic whole, but were crushed into a conglomerate mass by the weight of the autocratic power.

It never became a semi-independent factor in the State. What rights and privileges it possesses it received from the Monarchy, and consequently it has no deep-rooted jealousy or hatred of the Imperial prerogative. On the other hand, it has never had to struggle with the other social classes, and therefore it harbours towards them no feelings of rivalry or hostility. If we hear a Russian noble speak with indignation of autocracy or with acrimony of the *bourgeoisie*, we may be sure that these feelings have their source, not in traditional conceptions, but in principles learned from the modern schools of social and political philosophy. The class to which he belongs has undergone so many transformations that it has no hoary traditions or deep-rooted prejudices, and always willingly adapts itself to existing conditions. Indeed, it may be said in general that it looks more to the future than the past, and is ever ready to accept any new ideas that wear the badge of progress. Its freedom from traditions and prejudices makes it singularly susceptible of generous enthusiasm and capable of vigorous spasmodic action, but calm moral courage and tenacity of purpose are not among its prominent attributes. In a word, we find in it neither the peculiar virtues nor the peculiar vices which are engendered and fostered by an atmosphere of political liberty.

However we may explain the fact, there is no doubt that the Russian Noblesse has little or nothing of what we call aristocratic feeling—little or nothing of that haughty, domineering, exclusive spirit which we are accustomed to associate with the word Aristocracy. We find plenty of Russians who are proud of their wealth, of their culture, or of their official position, but we rarely find a Russian who is proud of his birth or imagines that the fact of his having a

long pedigree gives him any right to political privileges or social consideration. Hence there is a certain amount of truth in the oft-repeated saying that there is in reality no aristocracy in Russia.

Certainly the Noblesse as a whole cannot be called an aristocracy. If the term is to be used at all, it must be applied to a group of families which cluster around the Court and form the highest ranks of the Noblesse. This social aristocracy contains many old families, but its real basis is official rank and general culture rather than pedigree or blood. The feudal conceptions of noble birth, good family, and the like have been adopted by some of its members, but do not form one of its conspicuous features. Though habitually practising a certain exclusiveness, it has none of those characteristics of a caste which we find in the German *Adel*, and is utterly unable to understand such institutions as *Tafelfähigkeit*, by which a man who has not a pedigree of a certain length is considered unworthy to sit down at a royal table. It takes rather the English aristocracy as its model, and harbours the secret hope of one day obtaining a social and political position similar to that of the nobility and gentry of England. Though it has no peculiar legal privileges, its actual position in the Administration and at Court gives its members great facilities for advancement in the public service. On the other hand, its semi-bureaucratic character, together with the law and custom of dividing landed property among the children at the death of their parents, deprives it of stability. New men force their way into it by official distinction, whilst many of the old families are compelled by poverty to retire from its ranks. The son of a small proprietor or even of a parish priest may rise to the highest offices of State, whilst the descendants of the half-mythical Rurik may

descend to the position of peasants. It is said that not very long ago a certain Prince Krapotkin gained his living as a cabman in St. Petersburg!

It is evident, then, that this social aristocracy must not be confounded with the titled families. Titles do not possess the same value in Russia as in Western Europe. They are very common—because the titled families are numerous, and all the children bear the titles of the parents even while the parents are still alive—and they are by no means always associated with official rank, wealth, social position, or distinction of any kind. There are hundreds of princes and princesses who have not the right to appear at Court, and who would not be admitted into what is called in St. Petersburg *la société*, or indeed into refined society in any country.

The only genuine Russian title is *Knyaz*, commonly translated "Prince." It is borne by the descendants of Rurik, of the Lithuanian Prince Ghedimin, and of the Tartar Khans and Murzi officially recognised by the Tsars. Besides these, there are fourteen families who have adopted it by Imperial command during the last two centuries. The titles of count and baron are modern importations, beginning with the time of Peter the Great. From Peter and his successors about seventy families have received the title of count and ten that of baron. The latter are all, with two exceptions, of foreign extraction, and are mostly descended from Court Bankers.*

There is a very common idea that Russian nobles are as a rule enormously rich. This is a mistake. The majority of them are poor. At the time of the Emancipation, in 1861, there were 100,247 landed proprietors, and of these, more than 41,000 were

* Besides these, there are of course the German counts and barons of the Baltic Provinces, who are Russian subjects.

possessors of less than twenty-one male serfs—that is to say, were in a condition of poverty. A proprietor who was owner of 500 serfs was not considered as by any means very rich, and yet there were only 3,803 proprietors belonging to that category. There were a few, indeed, whose possessions were enormous. Count Sheremetief, for instance, possessed more than 150,000 male serfs, or in other words more than 300,000 souls; and thirty years ago Count Orloff-Davydof owned considerably more than half a million of acres. The Demídof family derive colossal revenues from their mines, and the Strógonofs have estates which, if put together, would be sufficient in extent to form a good-sized independent State in Western Europe. The very rich families, however, are not numerous. The lavish expenditure in which Russian nobles often indulge indicates too frequently not large fortune, but simply foolish ostentation and reckless improvidence.

Perhaps, after having spoken so much about the past history of the Noblesse, I ought to endeavour to cast its horoscope, or at least to say something of its probable future. Though predictions are always hazardous, it is sometimes possible, by tracing the great lines of history in the past, to follow them for a little distance into the future. If it be allowable to apply this method of prediction in the present matter, I should say that the Russian *Dvoryánstvo* will assimilate with the other classes, rather than form itself into an exclusive corporation. Hereditary aristocracies may be preserved—or at least their decomposition may be retarded—where they happen to exist, but it seems that they can no longer be created. In Western Europe there is a large amount of aristocratic sentiment, both in the nobles and in the people; but it exists in spite of, rather than in

consequence of, actual social conditions. It is not a product of modern society, but an heirloom that has come down to us from feudal times, when power, wealth, and culture were in the hands of a privileged few. If there ever was in Russia a period corresponding to the feudal times in Western Europe, it has long since been forgotten. There is very little aristocratic sentiment either in the people or in the nobles, and it is difficult to imagine any source from which it could now be derived. More than this, the nobles do not desire to make such an acquisition. In so far as they have any political aspirations, they aim at securing the political liberty of the people as a whole, and not at acquiring exclusive rights and privileges for their own class.

In that section which I have called a social aristocracy there are a few individuals who desire to gain exclusive political influence for the class to which they belong, but there is very little chance of their succeeding. If their desires were ever by chance realised, we should probably have a repetition of the scene which occurred in 1730. When in that year some of the great families raised the Duchess of Courland to the throne on condition of her ceding part of her power to a Supreme Council, the lower ranks of the Noblesse compelled her to tear up the constitution which she had signed! Those who dislike the autocratic power dislike the idea of an aristocratic oligarchy infinitely more. Nobles and people alike seem to hold instinctively the creed of the French philosopher, who thought it better to be governed by a lion of good family than by a hundred rats of his own species.

Of the present condition of the Noblesse I shall again have occasion to speak when I come to consider the consequences of the Emancipation.

CHAPTER XXI.

LANDED PROPRIETORS OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

Russian Hospitality—A Country-house—Its Owner described—His Life, Past and Present—Winter Evenings—Books—Connection with the Outer World—The Crimean War and the Emancipation—A Drunken, Dissolute Proprietor—An old General and his Wife—"Name-days"—A Legendary Monster—A Retired Judge—A Clever Scribe—Social Leniency—Cause of Demoralisation.

Of all the foreign countries in which I have travelled, Russia certainly bears off the palm in the matter of hospitality. Every spring I found myself in possession of a large number of invitations from landed proprietors in different parts of the country—far more than I could possibly accept—and a great part of the summer was generally spent in wandering about from one country house to another. I have no intention of asking the reader to accompany me in all these expeditions—for though pleasant in reality, they might be tedious in description—but I wish to introduce him to some typical examples of the landed proprietors. Among them are to be found nearly all ranks and conditions of men, from the rich magnate, surrounded with the refined luxury of West-European civilisation, to the poor, ill-clad, ignorant owner of a few acres which barely supply him with the necessaries of life. Let us take, first of all, a few specimens from the middle ranks.

In one of the central provinces, near the bank of a sluggish, meandering stream, stands an irregular group of wooden constructions—old, unpainted, blackened by time, and surmounted by high, sloping roofs of moss-covered planks. The principal building is a long,

one-storeyed dwelling-house, constructed at right angles to the road. At the front of the house is a spacious, ill-kept yard, and at the back an equally spacious shady garden, in which art carries on a feeble conflict with encroaching nature. At the other side of the yard, and facing the front door—or rather the front doors, for there are two—stand the stables, hay-shed, and granary, and near to that end of the house which is furthest from the road are two smaller houses, one of which is the kitchen, and the other the *Lyudskáya*, or servants' apartments. Beyond these we can perceive, through a single row of lime-trees, another group of time-blackened wooden constructions in a still more dilapidated condition. That is the farmyard.

There is certainly not much symmetry in the disposition of these buildings, but there is nevertheless a certain order and meaning in the apparent chaos. All the buildings which do not require stoves are built at a considerable distance from the dwelling-house and kitchen, which are more liable to take fire; and the kitchen stands by itself, because the odour of cookery where oil is used is by no means agreeable, even for those whose olfactory nerves are not very sensitive. The plan of the house is likewise not without a certain meaning. The rigorous separation of the sexes, which formed a characteristic trait of old Russian society, has long since disappeared, but its influence may still be traced in houses built on the old model. The house in question is one of these, and consequently it is composed of three sections—at the one end the male apartments, at the other the female apartments, and in the middle the neutral territory, comprising the dining-room and the salon. This arrangement has its conveniences, and explains the fact that the house has two front doors. At the back is a third door, which

opens from the neutral territory into a spacious verandah overlooking the garden.

Here lives, and has lived for many years, Ivan Ivanovitch K——, a gentleman of the old school, and a very worthy man of his kind. If we look at him as he sits in his comfortable arm-chair, with his capacious dressing-gown hanging loosely about him, we shall be able to read at a glance something of his character. Nature endowed him with large bones and broad shoulders, and evidently intended him to be a man of great muscular power, but he has contrived to frustrate this benevolent intention, and has now more fat than muscle. His close-cropped head is round as a bullet, and his features are massive and heavy, but the heaviness is relieved by an expression of calm contentment and imperturbable good-nature, which occasionally blossoms into a broad grin. His face is one of those on which no amount of histrionic talent could produce a look of care and anxiety, and for this it is not to blame, for such an expression has never been demanded of it. Like other mortals he sometimes experiences little annoyances, and on such occasions his small grey eyes sparkle and his face becomes suffused with a crimson glow that suggests apoplexy; but ill-fortune has never been able to get sufficiently firm hold of him to make him understand what such words as care and anxiety mean. Of struggle, disappointment, hope, and all the other feelings which give to human life a dramatic interest, he knows little by hearsay and nothing by experience. He has, in fact, always lived outside of that struggle for existence which modern philosophers declare to be the law of Nature.

Somewhere about seventy years ago Ivan Ivan'itch was born in the house where he still lives. His first lessons he received from the parish priest, and after-

wards he was taught by a deacon's son, who had studied in the ecclesiastical seminary to so little purpose that he was unable to pass the final examination. By both of these teachers he was treated with extreme leniency, and was allowed to learn as little as he chose. His father wished him to study hard, but his mother was afraid that study might injure his health, and accordingly gave him several holidays every week. Under these circumstances his progress was naturally not very rapid, and he was still very slightly acquainted with the elementary rules of arithmetic, when his father one day declared that he was already eighteen years of age, and must at once enter the service. But what kind of service? Ivan had no natural inclination for any kind of activity. The project of entering him as a *Junker* in a cavalry regiment, the colonel of which was an old friend of the family, did not at all please him. He had no love for military service, and positively disliked the prospect of an examination. Whilst seeming, therefore, to bow implicitly to the paternal authority, he induced his mother to oppose the scheme.

The dilemma in which Ivan found himself was this: in deference to his father he wished to be in the service and to gain that official rank which every Russian noble desires to possess, and at the same time, in deference to his mother and his own tastes, he wished to remain at home and continue his indolent mode of life. The Marshal of Noblesse, who happened to call one day, helped him out of the difficulty by offering to inscribe him as secretary in the *Dvoryánskaya Opéka*, a bureau which acts as curator for the estates of minors. All the duties of this office could be fulfilled by a paid secretary, and the nominal occupant would be periodically promoted as if he were an active official. This was precisely what Ivan required. He accepted eagerly the pro-

posal, and obtained, in the course of seven years, without any effort on his part, the rank of "collegiate secretary," corresponding to the "capitaine-en-second" of the military hierarchy. To mount higher he would have had to seek some place where he could not have fulfilled his duty by proxy, so he determined to rest on his laurels, and sent in his resignation.

Immediately after the termination of his official life his married life began. Before his resignation had been accepted he suddenly found himself one morning on the high road to matrimony. Here again there was no effort on his part. The course of true love, which is said never to run smooth for ordinary mortals, ran smooth for him. He never had even the trouble of proposing. The whole affair was arranged by his parents, who chose as bride for their son the only daughter of their nearest neighbour. The young lady was only about sixteen years of age, and was not remarkable for beauty, talent, or any other peculiarity, but she had one very important qualification—she was the daughter of a man who had an estate contiguous to their own, and who might give as a dowry a certain bit of land which they had long desired to add to their own property. The negotiations, being of a delicate nature, were entrusted to an old lady who had a great reputation for diplomatic skill in such matters, and she accomplished her mission with such success that in the course of a few weeks the preliminaries were arranged and the day fixed for the wedding. Thus Ivan Ivan'itch won his bride as easily as he had won his *tchin* of "collegiate secretary."

Though the bridegroom had received rather than taken to himself a wife and did not imagine for a moment that he was in love, he had no reason to regret the choice that was made for him. Maria

Petrovna was exactly suited by character and education to be the wife of a man like Ivan Ivan'itch. She had grown up at home in the society of nurses and servant-maids, and had never learned anything more than could be obtained from the parish priest and from "Ma'mselle," a personage occupying a position midway between a servant-maid and a governess. The first events of her life were the announcement that she was to be married and the preparations for the wedding. She still remembers the delight which the purchase of her trousseau afforded her, and keeps in her memory a full catalogue of the articles bought. The first years of her married life were not very happy, for she was treated by her mother-in-law as a naughty child who required to be frequently snubbed and lectured; but she bore the discipline with exemplary patience, and in due time became her own mistress and autocratic ruler in all domestic affairs. From that time she has lived an active, uneventful life. Between her and her husband there is as much mutual attachment as can reasonably be expected in phlegmatic natures after nearly half a century of matrimony. She has always devoted her energies to satisfying his simple material wants—of intellectual wants he has none—and securing his comfort in every possible way. Under this fostering care he "effeminated himself" (*obábilsya*), as he is wont to say. His love of shooting died out, he cared less and less to visit his neighbours, and each successive year he spent more and more time in his arm-chair.

The daily life of this worthy couple is singularly regular and monotonous, varying only with the changing seasons. In summer Ivan Ivan'itch gets up about seven o'clock, and puts on, with the assistance of his *valet de chambre*, a simple costume,

consisting chiefly of a faded, plentifully stained dressing-gown. Having nothing particular to do, he sits down at the open window and looks into the yard. As the servants pass he stops and questions them, and then gives them orders, or scolds them, as circumstances demand. Towards nine o'clock tea is announced, and he goes into the dining-room—a long, narrow apartment with bare wooden floor and no furniture but a table and chairs, all in a more or less rickety condition. Here he finds his wife with the tea-urn before her. In a few minutes the grandchildren come in, kiss their grandpapa's hand, and take their places round the table. As this morning meal consists merely of bread and tea, it does not last long; and all disperse to their several occupations. The head of the house begins the labours of the day by resuming his seat at the open window. When he has smoked some cigarettes and indulged in a proportionate amount of silent contemplation, he goes out with the intention of visiting the stables and farmyard, but generally before he has crossed the court he finds the heat unbearable, and returns to his former position by the open window. Here he sits tranquilly till the sun has so far moved round that the verandah at the back of the house is completely in the shade, when he has his arm-chair removed thither, and sits there till dinner-time.

Maria Petrovna spends her morning in a more active way. As soon as the breakfast-table has been cleared, she goes to the larder, takes stock of the provisions, arranges the *menu du jour*, and gives to the cook the necessary materials, with detailed instructions as to how they are to be prepared. The rest of the morning she devotes to her other household duties.

Towards one o'clock dinner is announced, and Ivan Ivan'itch prepares his appetite by swallowing at a gulp a wine-glassful of home-made bitters. Dinner is the great event of the day. The food is abundant and of good quality, but mushrooms, onions, and fat play a rather too important part in the repast, and the whole is prepared with very little attention to the recognised principles of culinary hygiene. Many of the dishes, indeed, would make a British valetudinarian stand aghast, but they seem to produce no bad effect on those Russian organisms which have never been weakened by town life, nervous excitement, or intellectual exertion.

No sooner has the last dish been removed than a deathlike stillness falls upon the house: it is the time of the after-dinner siesta. The young folks go into the garden, and all the other members of the household give way to the drowsiness naturally engendered by a heavy meal on a hot summer day. Ivan Ivan'itch retires to his own room, from which the flies have been carefully expelled. Maria Petrovna dozes in an arm-chair in the sitting-room, with a pocket-handkerchief spread over her face. The servants snore in the corridors, the garret, or the hay-shed; and even the old watch-dog in the corner of the yard stretches himself out at full length on the shady side of his kennel.

In about two hours the house gradually re-awakens. Doors begin to creak; the names of various servants are bawled out in all tones, from bass to falsetto; and footsteps are heard in the yard. Soon a man-servant issues from the kitchen bearing an enormous tea-urn, which puffs like a little steam-engine. The family assemble for tea. In Russia, as elsewhere, sleep after a heavy meal produces thirst, so that the tea and other beverages are very acceptable. Then some little

delicacies are served—such as fruit and wild berries, or cucumbers with honey, or something else of the kind, and the family again disperses. Ivan Ivan'itch takes a turn in the fields on his *begovuiya droshki*—an extremely light vehicle composed of two pairs of wheels joined together by a single board, on which the driver sits stride-legged; and Maria Petrovna probably receives a visit from the *Popadyà* (the priest's wife), who is the chief gossipmonger of the neighbourhood. There is not much scandal in the district, but what little there is the *Popadyà* carefully collects, and distributes among her acquaintances with undiscriminating generosity.

In the evening it often happens that a little group of peasants come into the court, and ask to see the "master." The master goes to the door, and generally finds that they have some favour to request. In reply to his question, "Well, children, what do you want?" they tell their story in a confused, rambling way, several of them speaking at a time, and he has to question and cross-question them before he comes to understand clearly what they desire. If he tells them he cannot grant it, they probably do not accept a first refusal, but endeavour by means of supplication to make him reconsider his decision. Stepping forward a little, and bowing low, one of the group begins in a half-respectful, half-familiar, caressing tone: "Little Father, Ivan Ivan'itch, be gracious; you are our father, and we are your children"—and so on. Ivan Ivan'itch good-naturedly listens, and again explains that he cannot grant what they ask; but they have still hopes of gaining their point by entreaty, and continue their supplications till at last his patience is exhausted and he says to them in a paternal tone, "Now, enough! enough! you are blockheads—blockheads all round! There's no use talking; it can't be

done." And with these words he enters the house, so as to prevent all further discussion.

A regular part of the evening's occupation is the interview with the steward. The work that has just been done, and the programme for the morrow, are always discussed at great length; and much time is spent in speculating as to the weather during the next few days. On this latter point the calendar is always carefully consulted, and great confidence is placed in its predictions, though past experience has often shown that they are not to be implicitly trusted. The conversation drags on till supper is announced, and immediately after that meal, which is an abridged repetition of dinner, all retire for the night.

Thus pass the days and weeks and months in the house of Ivan Ivan'itch, and rarely is there any deviation from the ordinary programme. The climate necessitates, of course, some slight modifications. When it is cold, the doors and windows have to be kept shut, and after heavy rains those who do not like to wade in mud have to remain in the house or garden. In the long winter evenings the family assemble in the sitting-room, and all kill time as they best can. Ivan Ivan'itch smokes and meditates, or listens to the barrel-organ played by one of the children. Maria Petrovna knits a stocking. The old aunt, who commonly spends the winter with them, plays Patience, and sometimes draws from the game conclusions as to the future. Her favourite predictions are that a stranger will arrive, or that a marriage will take place, and she can determine the sex of the stranger and the colour of the bridegroom's hair; but beyond this her art does not go, and she cannot satisfy the young ladies' curiosity as to further details.

Books and newspapers are rarely seen in the sitting-room, but for those who wish to read there is a book-

case full of miscellaneous literature, which gives some idea of the literary tastes of the family during several generations. The oldest volumes were bought by Ivan Ivan'itch's grandfather—a man who, according to the family traditions, enjoyed the confidence of the great Catherine. Though wholly overlooked by recent historians, he was evidently a man who had some pretensions to culture. He had his portrait painted by a foreign artist of considerable talent—it still hangs in the sitting-room—and he bought several pieces of Sèvres ware, the last of which stands on a commode in the corner and contrasts strangely with the rude home-made furniture and squalid appearance of the apartment. Among the books which bear his name are the tragedies of Sumarókof, who imagined himself to be "the Russian Voltaire"; the amusing comedies of Von-Wisin, some of which still keep the stage; the loud-sounding odes of the courtly Derzhávin; two or three books containing the mystic wisdom of Freemasonry as interpreted by Schwarz and Novikoff; Russian translations of Richardson's "Pamela," "Sir Charles Grandison," and "Clarissa Harlowe"; Rousseau's "Nouvelle Héloïse," in Russian garb; and three or four volumes of Voltaire in the original. Among the works collected at a somewhat later period are translations of Ann Radcliffe, of Scott's early novels, and of Ducray Duménil, whose stories, "Lolotte et Fanfan" and "Victor," once enjoyed a great reputation. At this point the literary tastes of the family appear to have died out, for the succeeding literature is represented exclusively by Kryloff's Fables, a farmer's manual, a handbook of family medicine, and a series of calendars. There are, however, some signs of a revival, for on the lowest shelf stand recent editions of Pushkin, Lérmontof, and Gógol, and a few works by living authors.

Sometimes the monotony of the winter is broken by visiting neighbours and receiving visitors in return, or in a more decided way by a visit of a few days to the capital of the province. In the latter case Maria Petrovna spends nearly all her time in shopping, and brings home a large collection of miscellaneous articles. The inspection of these by the assembled family forms an important domestic event, which completely throws into the shade the occasional visits of peddlers and colporteurs. Then there are the festivities at Christmas and Easter, and occasionally little incidents of a less agreeable kind. It may be that there is a heavy fall of snow, so that it is necessary to cut roads to the kitchen and stables; or wolves enter the courtyard at night and have a fight with the watch-dogs; or the news is brought that a peasant who had been drinking in a neighbouring village has been found frozen to death on the road.

Altogether the family live a very isolated life, but they have one bond of connection with the great outer world. Two of the sons are officers in the army, and both of them write home occasionally to their mother and sisters. To these two youths is devoted all the little stock of sentimentality which Maria Petrovna possesses. She can talk of them by the hour to anyone who will listen to her, and has related to the *Popadyà* a hundred times every trivial incident of their lives. Though they have never given her much cause for anxiety, and they are now men of middle age, she lives in constant fear that some evil may befall them. What she most fears is that they may be sent on a campaign or may fall in love with actresses. War and actresses are, in fact, the two bugbears of her existence, and whenever she has a disquieting dream she asks the priest to offer up a *molében* for the safety of her absent ones. Sometimes she

ventures to express her anxiety to her husband, and recommends him to write to them; but he considers writing a letter a very serious bit of work, and always replies evasively, "Well, well, we must think about it."

During the Crimean War, Ivan Ivan'itch half awoke from his habitual lethargy, and read occasionally the meagre official reports published by the Government. He was a little surprised that no great victories were reported, and that the army did not at once advance on Constantinople. As to causes he never speculated. Some of his neighbours told him that the army was disorganised, and the whole system of Nicholas had been proved to be utterly worthless. That might all be very true, but he did not understand military and political matters. No doubt it would all come right in the end. All did come right, after a fashion, and he again gave up reading newspapers; but ere long he was startled by reports much more alarming than any rumours of war. People began to talk about the peasant question, and to say openly that the serfs must soon be emancipated. For once in his life Ivan Ivan'itch asked explanations. Finding one of his neighbours, who had always been a respectable, sensible man, and a severe disciplinarian, talking in this way, he took him aside and asked what it all meant. The neighbour explained that the old order of things had shown itself bankrupt and was doomed, that a new epoch was opening, that everything was to be reformed, and that the Emperor, in accordance with a secret clause of the Treaty with the Allies, was about to grant a Constitution! Ivan Ivan'itch listened for a little in silence, and then, with a gesture of impatience, interrupted the speaker: "Polno durátchitsya! enough of fun and tomfoolery. Vassili Petróvitch, tell me seriously what you mean."

When Vassili Petróvitch vowed that he spoke in all seriousness, his friend gazed at him with a look of intense compassion, and remarked, as he turned away, "So you, too, have gone out of your mind!"

The utterances of Vassili Petróvitch, which his lethargic, sober-minded friend regarded as indicating temporary insanity in the speaker, represented fairly the mental condition of very many Russian nobles at that time, and were not without a certain foundation. The idea about a secret clause in the Treaty of Paris was purely imaginary, but it was quite true that the country was entering on an epoch of great reforms, among which the Emancipation question occupied the chief place. Of this even the sceptical Ivan Ivan'itch was soon convinced. The Emperor formally declared to the Noblesse of the province of Moscow that the actual state of things could not continue for ever, and called on the landed proprietors to consider by what means the condition of their serfs might be ameliorated. Provincial committees were formed for the purpose of preparing definite projects, and gradually it became apparent that the emancipation of the serfs was really at hand.

Ivan Ivan'itch was alarmed at the prospect of losing his authority over his serfs. Though he had never been a cruel taskmaster, he had not spared the rod when he considered it necessary, and he believed birch-twigs to be a necessary instrument in the Russian system of agriculture. For some time he drew consolation from the thought that peasants were not birds of the air, that they must under all circumstances require food and clothing, and that they would be ready to serve him as agricultural labourers; but when he learned that they were to receive a large part of the estate for their own use, his hopes fell, and he greatly feared that he would be inevitably ruined.

These dark forebodings have not been by any means realised. His serfs were emancipated and received about a half of the estate, but in return for the land ceded they paid him annually a considerable sum, and they were always ready to cultivate his fields for a fair remuneration. The yearly outlay was considerably greater, but the price of grain rose, and this counterbalanced the additional yearly expenditure. The administration of the estate has become much less patriarchal; much that was formerly left to custom and tacit understanding is now regulated by express agreement on purely commercial principles; a great deal more money is paid out and a great deal more received; there is much less authority in the hands of the master, and his responsibilities are proportionately diminished; but in spite of all these changes, Ivan Ivan'itch would have great difficulty in deciding whether he is a richer or a poorer man. He has fewer horses and fewer servants, but he has still more than he requires, and his mode of life has undergone no perceptible alteration. Maria Petrovna complains that she is no longer supplied with eggs, chickens,.and home-spun linen by the peasants, and that everything is three times as dear as it used to be; but somehow the larder is still full, and abundance reigns in the house as of old.

Ivan Ivan'itch certainly does not possess transcendent qualities of any kind. It would be impossible to make a hero out of him, even though his own son should be his biographer. Muscular Christians may reasonably despise him, and active, energetic men may fairly condemn him for his indolence and apathy. But, on the other hand, he has no very bad qualities. His vices are of the passive, negative kind. He is a respectable if not distinguished member of society, and appears a very worthy man when compared with

many of his neighbours who have been brought up in similar conditions. Take, for instance, his younger brother Dimítri, who lives a short way off.

Dimítri Ivan'itch, like his brother Ivan, had been endowed by Nature with a very decided repugnance to prolonged intellectual exertion, but as he was a man of good parts he did not fear a *Junker's* examination—especially when he could count on the colonel's protection—and accordingly entered the army. In his regiment were a number of jovial young officers like himself, always ready to relieve the monotony of garrison life by boisterous dissipation, and among these he easily acquired the reputation of being a thoroughly good fellow. In drinking-bouts he could hold his own with the best of them, and in all mad pranks invariably played the chief part. By this means he endeared himself to his comrades, and for a time all went well. The colonel had himself sown wild oats plentifully in his youth, and was quite disposed to overlook, as far as possible, the bacchanalian peccadilloes of his subordinates. But before many years had passed, the regiment suddenly changed its character. Certain rumours had reached headquarters, and the Emperor Nicholas appointed as colonel a stern disciplinarian of German origin, who aimed at making the regiment a kind of machine that should work with the accuracy of a chronometer.

This change did not at all suit the tastes of Dimítri Ivan'itch. He chafed under the new restraints, and as soon as he had gained the rank of lieutenant retired from the service to enjoy the freedom of country life. Shortly afterwards his father died, and he thereby became owner of an estate, with two hundred serfs. He did not, like his elder brother, marry, and "effeminate himself," but he did worse. In his little independent kingdom—for such was

practically a Russian estate in the good old times—he was lord of all he surveyed, and gave full scope to his boisterous humour, his passion for sport, and his love of drinking and dissipation. Many of the mad pranks in which he indulged will long be preserved by popular tradition, but they cannot well be related here.

Dimítri Ivan'itch is now a man long past middle age, and still continues his wild, dissipated life. His house resembles an ill-kept, disreputable tavern. The floor is filthy, the furniture chipped and broken, the servants indolent, slovenly, and in rags. Dogs of all breeds and sizes roam about the rooms and corridors. The master, when not asleep, is always in a more or less complete state of intoxication. Generally he has one or two guests staying with him—men of the same type as himself—and days and nights are spent in drinking and card-playing. When he cannot have his usual boon-companions he sends for one or two small proprietors who live near—men who are legally nobles, but who are so poor that they differ little from peasants. Formerly, when ordinary resources failed, he occasionally had recourse to the violent expedient of ordering his servants to stop the first passing travellers, whoever they might be, and bring them in by persuasion or force, as circumstance might demand. If the travellers refused to accept such rough, undesired hospitality, a wheel would be taken off their *tarantass*, or some indispensable part of the harness would be secreted, and they might consider themselves fortunate if they succeeded in getting away next morning.*

* This custom has fortunately gone out of fashion even in outlying districts, but an incident of the kind happened to a friend of mine as late as 1871. He was detained against his will for two whole days by a man whom he had never seen before, and at last effected his escape by bribing the servants of his tyrannical host.

In the time of serfage the domestic serfs had much to bear from their capricious, violent master. They lived in an atmosphere of abusive language, and were subjected not unfrequently to corporal punishment. Worse than this, their master was constantly threatening to "shave their forehead"—that is to say, to give them as recruits—and occasionally he put his threat into execution, in spite of the wailings and entreaties of the culprit and his relations. And yet, strange to say, nearly all of them remained with him as free servants after the Emancipation.

In justice to the Russian landed proprietors I must say that the class represented by Dimítri Ivan'itch has now almost disappeared. It was the natural result of serfage and social stagnation—of a state of society in which there were few legal and moral restraints, and few inducements to honourable activity.

Among the other landed proprietors of the district, one of the best known is Nicolaï Petróvitch B——, an old military man with the rank of general. Like Iván Ivan'itch, he belongs to the old school; but the two men must be contrasted rather than compared. The difference in their lives and characters is reflected in their outward appearance. Iyan Ivan'itch, as we know, is portly in form and heavy in all his movements, and loves to loll in his arm-chair or to loaf about the house in a capacious dressing-gown. The General, on the contrary, is thin, wiry, and muscular, wears habitually a close-buttoned military tunic, and always has a stern expression, the force of which is considerably augmented by a bristly moustache resembling a shoe-brush. As he paces up and down the room, knitting his brows and gazing at the floor, he looks as if he were forming combinations of the first magnitude; but those who know him well are aware that this is an optical delusion, of which he is

himself to some extent a victim. He is quite innocent of deep thought and concentrated intellectual effort. Though he frowns so fiercely he is by no means of a naturally ferocious temperament. Had he passed all his life in the country he would probably have been as good-natured and phlegmatic as Ivan Ivan'itch himself, but, unlike that worshipper of tranquillity, he had aspired to rise in the service, and had adopted the stern, formal bearing which the Emperor Nicholas considered indispensable in an officer. The manner which he had at first put on as part of his uniform became by the force of habit almost a part of his nature, and at the age of thirty he was a stern disciplinarian and uncompromising formalist, who confined his attention exclusively to drill and other military duties. Thus he rose steadily by his own merit, and reached the goal of his early ambition—the rank of general.

As soon as this point was reached he determined to leave the service and retire to his estate. Many considerations urged him to take this step. He enjoyed the title of Excellency, which he had long coveted, and when he put on his full uniform his breast was bespangled with medals and decorations. Since the death of his father the revenues of his property had been steadily decreasing, and report said that the best wood in his forest was rapidly disappearing. His wife had no love for the country, and would have preferred to settle in Moscow or St. Petersburg, but they found that with their small income they could not live in a large town in a style suitable to their rank.

The General determined to introduce order into his estate, and became a practical farmer; but a little experience convinced him that his new functions were much more difficult than the commanding of a

regiment. He has long since given over the practical management of the property to a steward, and he contents himself with exercising what he imagines to be an efficient control. Though he wishes to do much, he finds small scope for his activity, and spends his days in pretty much the same way as Ivan Ivan'itch, with this difference, that he plays cards whenever he gets an opportunity, and reads regularly the *Moscow Gazette* and *Russki Invalid*, the official military paper. What specially interests him is the list of promotions, retirements, and Imperial rewards for merit and seniority. When he sees the announcement that some old comrade has been made an officer of his Majesty's suite or has received a *grand cordon*, he frowns a little more than usual, and is tempted to regret that he retired from the service. Had he waited patiently, perhaps a bit of good fortune might have fallen likewise to his lot. This idea takes possession of him, and during the remainder of the day he is taciturn and morose. His wife notices the change, and knows the reason of it, but has too much good sense and tact to make any allusion to the subject.

Anna Alexándrovna—so the good lady is called—is an elderly dame who does not at all resemble the wife of Ivan Ivan'itch. She was long accustomed to a numerous military society, with dinner-parties, dancing, promenades, card-playing, and all the other amusements of garrison life, and she never contracted a taste for domestic concerns. Her knowledge of culinary affairs is extremely vague, and she has no idea of how to make preserves, *nalivka*, and other home-made delicacies, though Maria Petrovna, who is universally acknowledged to be a great adept in such matters, has proposed a hundred times to give her some choice recipes. In short, domestic affairs are a burden to her, and she entrusts them as far as possible

to the housekeeper. Altogether she finds country life very tiresome, but, possessing that placid, philosophical temperament which seems to have some causal connection with corpulence, she submits without murmuring, and tries to lighten a little the unavoidable monotony by paying visits and receiving visitors. The neighbours within a radius of twenty miles are, with few exceptions, more or less of the Ivan Ivan'itch and Maria Petrovna type — decidedly rustic in their manners and conceptions; but their company is better than absolute solitude, and they have at least the good quality of being always able and willing to play cards for any number of hours. Besides this, Anna Alexándrovna has the satisfaction of feeling that amongst them she is almost a great personage, and unquestionably an authority in all matters of taste and fashion; and she feels specially well disposed towards those of them who frequently address her as "Your Excellency."

The chief festivities take place on the "name-days" of the General and his spouse—that is to say, the days sacred to St. Nicholas and St. Anna. On these occasions all the neighbours come to offer their congratulations, and remain to dinner as a matter of course. After dinner the older visitors sit down to cards, and the young people extemporise a dance. The fête is specially successful when the eldest son comes home to take part in it, and brings a brother officer with him. He is now a general like his father.* In days gone by one of his comrades was expected to offer his hand to Olga Nikolaevna, the second daughter, a delicate young lady who had been educated in one of the great "Instituts"—gigantic boarding-schools, founded

* Generals are much more common in Russia than in other countries. A few years ago there was an old lady in Moscow who had a family of ten sons, all of whom were generals! The rank may be obtained in the civil as well as the military service.

and kept up by the Government, for the daughters of those who are supposed to have deserved well of their country. Unfortunately the expected offer was never made, and she and her sister live at home as old maids, bewailing the absence of "civilised" society, and killing time in a harmless, elegant way by means of music, needlework, and light literature.

At those "name-day" gatherings one used to meet still more interesting specimens of the old school. One of them I remember particularly. He was a tall, corpulent old man, in a threadbare frock-coat, which wrinkled up about his waist. His shaggy eyebrows almost covered his small, dull eyes, his heavy moustache partially concealed a large mouth, strongly indicating sensuous tendencies. His hair was cut so short that it was difficult to say what its colour would be if it were allowed to grow. He always arrived in his *tarantass* just in time for the *zakuska*—the appetising collation that is served shortly before dinner—grunted out a few congratulations to the host and hostess and monosyllabic greetings to his acquaintances, ate a copious meal, and immediately afterwards placed himself at a card-table, where he sat in silence as long as he could get anyone to play with him. People did not like, however, to play with Andrei Vassil'itch, for his society was not agreeable, and he always contrived to go home with a well-filled purse.

Andrei Vassil'itch was a noted man in the neighbourhood. He was the centre of a whole cycle of legends, and I have often heard that his name was used with effect by nurses to frighten naughty children. I never missed an opportunity of meeting him, for I was curious to see and study a legendary monster in the flesh. How far the numerous stories told about him were true I cannot pretend to say, but they were certainly not without foundation. In his youth he

had served for some time in the army, and was celebrated, even in an age when martinets had always a good chance of promotion, for his brutality to his subordinates. His career was cut short, however, when he had only the rank of captain. Having compromised himself in some way, he found it advisable to send in his resignation and retire to his estate. Here he organised his house on Mahometan rather than Christian principles, and ruled his servants and peasants as he had been accustomed to rule his soldiers — using corporal punishment in merciless fashion. His wife did not venture to protest against the Mahometan arrangements, and any peasant who stood in the way of their realisation was at once given as a recruit, or transported to Siberia, in accordance with his master's demand.* At last his tyranny and extortion drove his serfs to revolt. One night his house was surrounded and set on fire, but he contrived to escape the fate that was prepared for him, and caused all who had taken part in the revolt to be mercilessly punished. This was a severe lesson, but it had no effect upon him. Taking precautions against a similar surprise, he continued to tyrannise and extort as before, until in 1861 the serfs were emancipated, and his authority came to an end.

A very different sort of man was Pavel Trophim'itch, who likewise came regularly to pay his respects and present his congratulations to the General and "Gheneralsha."† It was pleasant to turn from the hard, wrinkled, morose features of the legendary monster to the soft, smooth, jovial face of this man,

* When a proprietor considered any of his serfs unruly he could, according to law, have them transported to Siberia without trial, on condition of paying the expenses of transport. Arrived at their destination, they received land, and lived as free colonists, with the single restriction that they were not allowed to leave the locality where they settled.

† The female form of the word General.

who had been accustomed to look at the bright side of things, till his face had caught something of their brightness. "A good, jovial, honest face!" a stranger might exclaim as he looked at him. Knowing something of his character and history, I could not endorse such an opinion. Jovial he certainly was, for few men were more capable of making and enjoying mirth. Good he might be also called, if the word were taken in the sense of good-natured, for he never took offence, and was always ready to do a kindly action if it did not cost him any trouble. But as to his honesty, that required some qualification. Wholly untarnished his reputation certainly could not be, for he had been a judge in the District Court before the time of the judicial reforms; and, not being a Cato, he had succumbed to the usual temptations. He had never studied law, and made no pretensions to the possession of great legal knowledge. To all who would listen to him he declared openly that he knew much more about pointers and setters than about legal formalities. But his estate was very small, and he could not afford to give up his appointment.

Of these unreformed Courts, which are happily among the things of the past, I shall have occasion to speak in the sequel. For the present I wish merely to say that they were thoroughly corrupt, and I hasten to add that Pavel Trophim'itch was by no means a judge of the worst kind. He had been known to protect widows and orphans against those who wished to despoil them, and no amount of money would induce him to give an unjust decision against a friend who had privately explained the case to him; but when he knew nothing of the case or of the parties he readily signed the decision prepared by the secretary, and quietly pocketed the proceeds, without feeling

any very disagreeable twinges of conscience. All judges, he knew, did likewise, and he had no pretension to being better than his fellows.

When Pavel Trophim'itch played cards at the General's house or elsewhere, a small, awkward, clean-shaven man, with dark eyes and a Tartar cast of countenance, might generally be seen sitting at the same table. His name was Alexei Petróvitch T——. Whether he really had any Tartar blood in him it is impossible to say, but certainly his ancestors for one or two generations were all good orthodox Christians. His father had been a poor military surgeon in a marching regiment, and he himself had become at an early age a scribe in one of the bureaux of the district town. He was then very poor, and had great difficulty in supporting life on the miserable pittance which he received as a salary; but he was a sharp, clever youth, and soon discovered that even a scribe had a great many opportunities of extorting money from the ignorant public.

These opportunities Alexei Petróvitch used with great ability, and became known as one of the most accomplished bribe-takers (*vzyátotchniki*) in the district. His position, however, was so very subordinate that he would never have become rich had he not fallen upon a very ingenious expedient which completely succeeded. Hearing that a small proprietor, who had an only daughter, had come to live in the town for a few weeks, he took a room in the inn where the new-comers lived, and when he had made their acquaintance he fell dangerously ill. Feeling his last hours approaching, he sent for a priest, confided to him that he had amassed a large fortune, and requested that a will should be drawn up. In the will he bequeathed large sums to all his relations, and a considerable sum to the parish church.

The whole affair was to be kept a secret till after his death, but his neighbour—the old gentleman with the daughter—was called in to act as a witness. When all this had been done he did not die, but rapidly recovered, and now induced the old gentleman to whom he had confided his secret to grant him his daughter's hand. The daughter had no objections to marry a man possessed of such wealth, and the marriage was duly celebrated. Shortly after this the father died—without discovering, it is to be hoped, the hoax that had been perpetrated — and Alexei Petróvitch became virtual possessor of a very comfortable little estate. With the change in his fortunes he completely changed his principles, or at least his practice. In all his dealings he was strictly honest. He lent money, it is true, at from ten to fifteen per cent., but that was considered in these parts not a very exorbitant rate of interest, nor was he unnecessarily hard upon his debtors.

It may seem strange that an honourable man like the General should receive in his house such a motley company, comprising men of decidedly tarnished reputation; but in this respect he was not at all peculiar. One constantly meets in Russian society persons who are known to have been guilty of flagrant dishonesty, and we find that men who are themselves honourable enough associate with them on friendly terms. This social leniency, moral laxity, or whatever else it may be called, is the result of various causes. Several concurrent influences have tended to lower the moral standard of the Noblesse. Formerly, when the noble lived on his estate, he could play with impunity the petty tyrant, and could freely indulge his legitimate and illegitimate caprices without any legal or moral restraint. I do not at all mean to assert that all proprietors abused their

authority, but I venture to say that no class of men can long possess such enormous arbitrary power over those around them without being thereby more or less demoralised. When the noble entered the service he had not the same immunity from restraint—on the contrary, his position resembled rather that of the serf—but he breathed an atmosphere of peculation and jobbery, little conducive to moral purity and uprightness. If an official had refused to associate with those who were tainted with the prevailing vices, he would have found himself completely isolated, and would have been ridiculed as a modern Don Quixote. Add to this that all classes of the Russian people have a certain kindly, apathetic good-nature which makes them very charitable towards their neighbours, and that they do not always distinguish between forgiving private injury and excusing public delinquencies. If we bear all this in mind, we may readily understand that in the time of serfage and maladministration a man could be guilty of very reprehensible practices without incurring social excommunication.

During the period of moral awakening after the Crimean War and the death of Nicholas I., society revelled in virtuous indignation against the prevailing abuses, and placed on the pillory the most prominent delinquents; but the intensity of the moral feeling has declined, and something of the old apathy has returned. This might have been predicted by anyone well acquainted with the character and past history of the Russian people. Russia advances on the road of progress not in that smooth, gradual, prosaic way to which we are accustomed, but by a series of unconnected, frantic efforts, each of which is naturally followed by a period of temporary exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXII.

PROPRIETORS OF THE MODERN SCHOOL.

A Russian *Petit Maître*—His House and Surroundings—Abortive Attempts to Improve Agriculture and the Condition of the Serfs—A Comparison—A "Liberal" *Tchinóvnik*—His Idea of Progress—A Justice of the Peace—His Opinion of Russian Literature, *Tchinóvniks*, and *Petits Maîtres*—His Supposed and Real Character—An Extreme Radical—Disorders in the Universities—Administrative Procedure—Russia's Capacity for Accomplishing Political and Social Evolutions—A Court Dignitary in his Country House.

HITHERTO I have presented to the reader old-fashioned types which were common enough thirty years ago, when I first resided in Russia, but which are rapidly disappearing. Let me now present a few of the modern school.

In the same district as Ivan Ivan'itch and the General lives Victor Alexandr'itch L——. As we approach his house we can at once perceive that he differs from the majority of his neighbours. The gate is painted and moves easily on its hinges, the fence is in good repair, the short avenue leading up to the front door is well kept, and in the garden we can perceive at a glance that more attention is paid to flowers than to vegetables. The house is of wood, and not large, but it has some architectural pretensions in the form of a great, pseudo-Doric wooden portico that covers three-fourths of the façade. In the interior we remark everywhere the influence of Western civilisation. Victor Alexandr'itch is by no means richer than Ivan Ivan'itch, but his rooms are much more luxuriously furnished. The furniture is of a lighter model, more comfortable, and in a much

better state of preservation. Instead of the bare, scantily furnished sitting-room, with the old-fashioned barrel-organ which played only six airs, we find an elegant drawing-room, with a piano by one of the most approved makers, and numerous articles of foreign manufacture, comprising a small buhl table and two bits of genuine old Wedgwood. The servants are clean, and dressed in European costume. The master, too, is very different in appearance. He pays great attention to his toilette, wearing a dressing-gown only in the early morning, and a fashionable lounging coat during the rest of the day. The Turkish pipes which his grandfather loved he holds in abhorrence, and habitually smokes cigarettes. With his wife and daughters he always speaks French, and calls them by French or English names.

But the part of the house which most strikingly illustrates the difference between old and new is "le cabinet de monsieur." In the cabinet of Ivan Ivan'-itch the furniture consists of a broad sofa which serves as a bed, a few deal chairs, and a clumsy deal table, on which are generally to be found a bundle of greasy papers, an old chipped ink-bottle, a pen, and a calendar. The cabinet of Victor Alexandr'itch has an entirely different appearance. It is small, but at once comfortable and elegant. The principal objects which it contains are a library table, with inkstand, presse-papier, paper-knives, and other articles in keeping, and in the opposite corner a large bookcase. The collection of books is remarkable, not from the number of volumes or the presence of rare editions, but from the variety of the subjects. History, art, fiction, the drama, political economy, and agriculture are represented in about equal proportions. Some of the works are in Russian, others in German, a large number in French, and a few in Italian. The

collection illustrates the former life and present occupations of the owner.

The father of Victor Alexandr'itch was a landed proprietor, who had made a successful career in the civil service, and desired that his son should follow the same profession. For this purpose Victor was first carefully trained at home, and then sent to the University of Moscow, where he spent four years as a student of law. From the University he passed to the Ministry of the Interior in St. Petersburg, but he found the monotonous routine of official life not at all suited to his taste, and very soon sent in his resignation. The death of his father had made him proprietor of an estate, and thither he retired, hoping to find there plenty of occupation more congenial than the writing of official papers.

At the University of Moscow he had attended lectures on history and philosophy, and had got through a large amount of desultory reading. The chief result of his studies was the acquisition of many ill-digested general principles, and certain vague, generous, humanitarian aspirations. With this intellectual capital he hoped to lead a useful life in the country. When he had repaired and furnished the house he set himself to improve the estate. In the course of his promiscuous reading he had stumbled on some descriptions of English and Tuscan agriculture, and had there learned what wonders might be effected by a rational system of farming. Why should not Russia follow the example of England and Tuscany? By proper drainage, plentiful manure, good ploughs, and the cultivation of artificial grasses, the production might be multiplied tenfold; and by the introduction of agricultural machines the manual labour might be greatly diminished. All this seemed as simple as a sum in arithmetic, and Victor Alexandr'itch, *more*

scholarium rei familiaris ignarus, without a moment's hesitation expended his ready money in procuring from England a threshing machine, ploughs, harrows, and other implements of the newest model.

The arrival of these was an event that was long remembered. The peasants examined them with attention, not unmixed with wonder, but said nothing. When the master explained to them the advantages of the new instruments, they still remained silent. Only one old man, gazing at the threshing machine, remarked, in an audible "aside," "A cunning people these Germans!"* On being asked for their opinion, they replied vaguely, "How should we know? It *ought* to be so." But when their master had retired, and was explaining to his wife and the French governess that the chief obstacle to progress in Russia was the apathetic indolence and conservative spirit of the peasantry, they expressed their opinions more freely. "These may be all very well for the Germans, but they won't do for us. How are our little horses to drag these big ploughs? And as for that (the threshing machine), it's of no use." Further examination and reflection confirmed this first impression, and it was unanimously decided that no good would come of the new-fangled inventions.

These apprehensions proved to be only too well founded. The ploughs were much too heavy for the peasants' small horses, and the threshing-machine broke down at the first attempt to use it. For the purchase of lighter implements or stronger horses there was no ready money, and for the repairing of the threshing machine there was not an engineer within a radius of a hundred and fifty miles. The

* The Russian peasant comprehends all the inhabitants of Western Europe under the term Nyemtsi, which in the language of the educated designates only Germans. The rest of humanity is composed of Pravoslavniye (Greek Orthodox), Busurmanye (Mahometans), and Poliacki (Poles).

experiment was, in short, a complete failure, and the new purchases were put away out of sight.

For some weeks after this incident Victor Alexandr'itch felt very despondent, and spoke more than usual about the apathy and stupidity of the peasantry. His faith in infallible science was somewhat shaken, and his benevolent aspirations were for a time laid aside. But this eclipse of faith was not of long duration. Gradually he recovered his normal condition, and began to form new schemes. From the study of certain works on political economy he learned that the system of Communal property was ruinous to the fertility of the soil, and that free labour was always more productive than serfage. By the light of these principles he discovered why the peasantry in Russia were so poor, and by what means their condition could be ameliorated. The Communal land should be divided into family lots, and the serfs, instead of being forced to work for the proprietor, should pay a yearly sum as rent. The advantages of this change he perceived clearly—as clearly as he had formerly perceived the advantages of English agricultural implements—and he determined to make the experiment on his own estate.

His first step was to call together the more intelligent and influential of his serfs, and to explain to them his project; but his efforts at explanation were eminently unsuccessful. Even with regard to ordinary current affairs he could not express himself in that simple, homely language with which alone the peasants are familiar, and when he spoke on abstract subjects he naturally became quite unintelligible to his uneducated audience. The serfs listened attentively, but understood nothing. He might as well have spoken to them, as he often did in another kind of society, about the comparative excellence of Italian

and German music. At a second attempt he had rather more success. The peasants came to understand that what he wished was to break up the *Mir*, or Rural Commune, and to put them all "on *obrok*" —that is to say, make them pay a yearly sum instead of giving him a certain amount of agricultural labour. Much to his astonishment, his scheme did not meet with any sympathy. As to being put "on *obrok*," the serfs did not much object, though they preferred to remain as they were; but his proposal to break up the *Mir* astonished and bewildered them. They regarded it as a sea-captain might regard the proposal of a scientific wiseacre to knock a hole in the ship's bottom in order to make her sail faster. Though they did not say much, he was intelligent enough to see that they would offer a strenuous passive resistance, and as he did not wish to act tyrannically, he let the matter drop. Thus a second benevolent scheme was shipwrecked. Many other schemes had a similar fate, and Victor Alexandr'itch began to perceive that it was very difficult to do good in this world, especially when the persons to be benefited were Russian peasants.

In reality the fault lay less with the serfs than with their master. Victor Alexandr'itch was by no means a stupid man. On the contrary, he had more than average talents. Few men were more capable of grasping a new idea and forming a scheme for its realisation, and few men could play more dexterously with abstract principles. What he wanted was the power of dealing with concrete facts. The principles which he had acquired from University lectures and desultory reading were far too vague and abstract for practical use. He had studied abstract science without gaining any technical knowledge of details, and consequently when he stood face to face with real life

he was like a student who, having studied mechanics in text-books, is suddenly placed in a workshop and ordered to construct a machine. Only there was one difference: Victor Alexandr'itch was not ordered to do anything. Voluntarily, without any apparent necessity, he set himself to work with tools which he could not handle. It was this that chiefly puzzled the peasants. Why should he trouble himself with these new schemes, when he might live comfortably as he was? In some of his projects they could detect a desire to increase the revenue, but in others they could discover no such motive. In these latter they attributed his conduct to pure caprice, and put it into the same category as those mad pranks in which proprietors of jovial humour sometimes indulged.

In the last years of serfage there were a good many landed proprietors like Victor Alexandr'itch—men who wished to do something beneficent, and did not know how to do it. When serfage was being abolished the majority of these men took an active part in the great work and rendered valuable service to their country. Victor Alexandr'itch acted otherwise. At first he sympathised warmly with the proposed emancipation and wrote several articles on the advantages of free labour, but when the Government took the matter into its own hands he declared that the officials had deceived and slighted the Noblesse, and he went over to the Opposition. Before the Imperial Edict was signed he went abroad, and travelled for three years in Germany, France, and Italy. Shortly after his return he married a pretty, accomplished young lady, the daughter of an eminent official in St. Petersburg, and since that time he has lived in his country house.

Though a man of education and culture, Victor Alexandr'itch spends his time in almost as indolent a

way as the men of the old school. He rises somewhat later, and instead of sitting by the open window and gazing into the courtyard, he turns over the pages of a book or periodical. Instead of dining at mid-day and supping at nine o'clock, he takes *déjeuner* at twelve and dines at five. He spends less time in sitting in the verandah and pacing up and down with his hands behind his back, for he can vary the operation of time killing by occasionally writing a letter, or by standing behind his wife at the piano while she plays selections from Mozart and Beethoven. But these peculiarities are merely variations in detail. If there is any essential difference between the lives of Victor Alexandr'itch and of Ivan Ivan'itch, it is in the fact that the former never goes out into the fields to see how the work is done, and never troubles himself with the state of the weather, the condition of the crops, and cognate subjects. He leaves the management of his estate entirely to his steward, and refers to that personage all peasants who come to him with complaints or petitions. Though he takes a deep interest in the peasant as an impersonal, abstract entity, and loves to contemplate concrete examples of the genus in the works of certain popular authors, he does not like to have any direct relations with peasants in the flesh. If he has to speak with them he always feels awkward, and suffers from the odour of their sheepskins. Ivan Ivan'itch is ever ready to talk with the peasants, and give them sound, practical advice or severe admonitions; and in the old times he was apt, in moments of irritation, to supplement his admonitions by a free use of his fists. Victor Alexandr'itch, on the contrary, never could give any advice except vague commonplace, and as to using his fist, he would have shrunk from that, not only from respect to humanitarian principles, but also from

motives which belong to the region of æsthetic sensitiveness.

This difference between the two men has an important influence on their pecuniary affairs. The stewards of both steal from their masters; but that of Ivan Ivan'itch steals with difficulty, and to a very limited extent, whereas that of Victor Alexandr'itch steals regularly and methodically, and counts his gains, not by kopeks, but by roubles. Though the two estates are of about the same size and value, they give a very different revenue. The rough, practical man has a much larger income than his elegant, well educated neighbour, and at the same time spends very much less. The consequences of this, if not at present visible, must some day become painfully apparent. Ivan Ivan'itch will doubtless leave to his children an unencumbered estate and a certain amount of capital. The children of Victor Alexandr'itch have a different prospect. He has already begun to mortgage his property and to cut down the timber, and he always finds a deficit at the end of the year. What will become of his wife and children when the estate comes to be sold for payment of the mortgage, it is difficult to predict. He thinks very little of that eventuality, and when his thoughts happen to wander in that direction; he consoles himself with the thought that before the crash comes he will have inherited a fortune from a rich uncle who has no children.

The proprietors of the old school lead the same uniform, monotonous life year after year, with very little variation. Victor Alexandr'itch, on the contrary, feels the need of a periodical return to "civilised society," and accordingly spends a few weeks every winter in St. Petersburg. During the summer months he has the society of his brother—*un*

homme tout à fait civilisé—who possesses an estate a few miles off.

This brother, Vladimir Alexandr'itch, was educated in the School of Law in St. Petersburg, and has since risen rapidly in the service. He holds now a prominent position in one of the Ministries, and has the honorary Court title of "Chambellan de sa Majesté." He is a marked man in the higher circles of the Administration, and will, it is thought, some day become Minister. Though an adherent of enlightened views, and a professed "Liberal," he contrives to keep on very good terms with those who imagine themselves to be "Conservatives." In this he is assisted by his soft, oily manner. If you express an opinion to him he will always begin by telling you that you are quite right; and if he ends by showing you that you are quite wrong, he will at least make you feel that your error is not only excusable, but in some way highly creditable to your intellectual acuteness or goodness of heart. In spite of his Liberalism he is a staunch Monarchist, and considers that the time has not yet come for the Emperor to grant a Constitution. He recognises that the present order of things has its defects, but thinks that, on the whole, it acts very well, and would act much better if certain high officials were removed, and more energetic men put in their places. Like all genuine St. Petersburg *tchinóvniks* (officials), he has great faith in the miraculous power of Imperial ukazes and Ministerial circulars, and believes that national progress consists in multiplying these documents, and centralising the Administration, so as to give them more effect. As a supplementary means of progress he highly approves of æsthetic culture, and he can speak with some eloquence of the humanising influence of the fine arts. For his own part he is well acquainted with French and English

classics, and particularly admires Macaulay, whom he declares to have been not only a great writer, but also a great statesman. Among writers of fiction he gives the palm to George Eliot, and speaks of the novelists of his own country, and, indeed, of Russian literature as a whole, in the most disparaging terms.

A very different estimate of Russian literature is held by Alexander Ivan'itch N——, formerly arbiter in peasant affairs, and afterwards justice of the peace. Discussions on this subject often take place between the two. The admirer of Macaulay declares that Russia has, properly speaking, no literature whatever, and that the works which bear the names of Russian authors are nothing but a feeble echo of the literature of Western Europe. "Imitators," he is wont to say, "skilful imitators, we have produced in abundance. But where is there a man of original genius? What is our famous poet Zhukófski? A translator. What is Pushkin? A clever pupil of the romantic school. What is Lérmontof? A feeble imitator of Byron. What is Gógol?"

At this point Alexander Ivan'itch invariably intervenes. He is ready to sacrifice all the pseudo-classic and romantic poetry, and, in fact, the whole of Russian literature anterior to about the year 1840, but he will not allow anything disrespectful to be said of Gógol, who about that time founded the Russian realistic school. "Gógol," he holds, "was a great and original genius. Gógol not only created a new kind of literature; he at the same time transformed the reading public, and inaugurated a new era in the intellectual development of the nation. By his humorous, satirical sketches he swept away the metaphysical dreaming and foolish romantic affectation then in fashion, and taught men to see their country as it was, in all its hideous ugliness. With

his help the young generation perceived the rottenness of the Administration, and the meanness, stupidity, dishonesty, and worthlessness of the landed proprietors, whom he made the special butt of his ridicule. The recognition of defects produced a desire for reform. From laughing at the proprietors there was but one step to despising them, and when we learned to despise the proprietors we naturally came to sympathise with the serfs. Thus the Emancipation was prepared by the literature; and when the great question had to be solved, it was the literature that discovered a satisfactory solution."

This is a subject on which Alexander Ivan'itch feels very strongly, and on which he always speaks with warmth. He knows a good deal regarding the intellectual movement which began about 1840, and culminated in the great reforms of the sixties. As a University student he troubled himself very little with serious academic work, but he read with intense interest all the leading periodicals, and adopted the doctrine of Belinski that art should not be cultivated for its own sake, but should be made subservient to social progress. This belief was confirmed by a perusal of some of George Sand's earlier works, which were for him a kind of revelation. Social questions engrossed his thoughts, and all other subjects seemed puny by comparison. When the Emancipation question was raised he saw an opportunity of applying some of his theories, and threw himself enthusiastically into the new movement as an ardent abolitionist. When the law was passed he helped to put it into execution by serving for three years as an Arbiter of the Peace. Now he is an old man, but he has preserved some of his youthful enthusiasm, attends regularly the annual assemblies of the Zemstvo, and takes a lively interest in all public affairs.

As an ardent partisan of local self-government he habitually scoffs at the centralised bureaucracy, which he proclaims to be the great bane of his unhappy country. "These tchinovniks," he is wont to say in moments of excitement, "who live in St. Petersburg and govern the Empire, know about as much of Russia as they do of China. They live in a world of official documents, and are hopelessly ignorant of the real wants and interests of the people. So long as all the required formalities are duly observed they are perfectly satisfied. The people may be allowed to die of starvation if only the fact do not appear in the official reports. Powerless to do any good themselves, they are powerful enough to prevent others from working for the public good, and are extremely jealous of all private initiative. How have they acted, for instance, towards the Zemstvo? The Zemstvo is really a good institution, and might have done great things if it had been left alone, but as soon as it began to show a little independent energy the officials at once clipped its wings and then strangled it. Towards the Press they have acted in the same way. They are afraid of the Press, because they fear above all things a healthy public opinion, which the Press alone can create. Everything that disturbs the habitual routine alarms them. Russia cannot make any real progress so long as she is ruled by these cursed tchinovniks."

Scarcely less pernicious than the *tchinóvnik*, in the eyes of our would-be reformer, is the *baritch*—that is to say, the pampered, capricious, spoiled child of mature years, whose life is spent in elegant indolence and fine talking. Our friend Victor Alexandr'itch is commonly selected as a representative of this type. "Look at him!" exclaims Alexander Ivan'itch. "What a useless, contemptible

member of society! In spite of his generous aspirations he never succeeds in doing anything useful to himself or to others. When the peasant question was raised and there was work to be done, he went abroad and talked Liberalism in Paris and Baden-Baden. Though he reads, or at least professes to read, books on agriculture, and is always ready to discourse on the best means of preventing the exhaustion of the soil, he knows less of farming than a peasant boy of twelve, and when he goes into the fields he can hardly distinguish rye from oats. Instead of babbling about German and Italian music, he would do well to learn a little about practical farming, and look after his estate."

Whilst Alexander Ivan'itch thus censures his neighbours, he is himself not without detractors. Some staid old proprietors regard him as a dangerous man, and quote expressions of his which seem to indicate that his notions of property are somewhat loose. Many consider that his Liberalism is of a very violent kind, and that he has strong republican sympathies. In his decisions as Justice he often leaned, it is said, to the side of the peasants against the proprietors. Then he was always trying to induce the peasants of the neighbouring villages to found schools, and he had wonderful ideas about the best method of teaching children. These and similar facts make many people believe that he has very advanced ideas, and one old gentleman habitually calls him—half in joke and half in earnest—"our friend the Communist."

In reality Alexander Ivan'itch has nothing of the communist about him. Though he loudly denounces the *tchinóvnik* spirit—or, as we should say, red-tape in all its forms—and is an ardent partisan of local self-government, he is one of the last men in the

world to take part in any revolutionary movement. He would like to see the Central Government enlightened and controlled by public opinion and by a national representation, but he believes that this can only be effected by voluntary concessions on the part of the Autocratic Power. He has, perhaps, a sentimental love of the peasantry, and is always ready to advocate its interests; but he has come too much in contact with individual peasants to accept those idealised descriptions in which some popular writers indulge, and it may safely be asserted that the accusation of his voluntarily favouring peasants at the expense of proprietors is wholly unfounded. Alexander Ivan'itch is, in fact, a quiet, sensible man, who is capable of generous enthusiasm, and is not at all satisfied with the existing state of things; but he is not a dreamer and a *révolutionnaire*, as some of his neighbours assert.

I am afraid I cannot say as much for his younger brother Nikolaï, who lives with him. Nikolaï Ivan'itch is a tall, slender man, about sixty years of age, with emaciated face, bilious complexion and long black hair—evidently a person of excitable, nervous temperament. When he speaks he articulates rapidly, and uses more gesticulation than is common among his countrymen. His favourite subject of conversation, or rather of discourse, for he more frequently preaches than talks, is the lamentable state of the country and the worthlessness of the Government. Against the Government he has a great many causes for complaint, and one or two of a personal kind. In 1861 he was a student in the University of St. Petersburg. At that time there was a great deal of public excitement all over Russia, and especially in the capital. The serfs had just been emancipated, and other important reforms had been undertaken.

There was a general conviction among the young generation—and it must be added among many older men—that the autocratic, paternal system of government was at an end, and that Russia was about to be reorganised according to the most advanced principles of political and social science. The students, sharing this conviction, wished to be freed from all academical authority, and to organise a kind of academic self-government. They desired especially the right of holding public meetings for the discussion of their common affairs. The authorities would not allow this, and issued a list of rules prohibiting meetings and raising the class-fees, so as practically to exclude many of the poorer students. This was felt to be a wanton insult to the spirit of the new era. In spite of the prohibition, indignation meetings were held, and fiery speeches made by male and female orators, first in the class-rooms, and afterwards in the courtyard of the University. On one occasion a long procession marched through the principal streets to the house of the Curator. Never had such a spectacle been seen before in St. Petersburg. Timid people feared that it was the commencement of a revolution, and dreamed about barricades. At last the authorities took energetic measures; about 300 students were arrested, and of these, thirty-two were expelled from the University.

Among those who were expelled was Nicolaï Ivan'itch. All his hopes of becoming a professor as he had intended were thereby shipwrecked, and he had to look out for some other profession. A literary career now seemed the most promising, and certainly the most congenial to his tastes. It would enable him to gratify his ambition of being a public man, and give him opportunities of attacking and annoying his persecutors. He had already written occasionally

for one of the leading periodicals, and now he became a regular contributor. His stock of positive knowledge was not very large, but he had the power of writing fluently and of making his readers believe that he had an unlimited store of political wisdom which the Press-censure prevented him from publishing. Besides this, he had the talent of saying sharp, satirical things about those in authority, in such a way that even a Press Censor could not easily raise objections. Articles written in this style were sure at that time to be popular, and his had a very great success. He became a known man in literary circles, and for a time all went well. But gradually he became less cautious, whilst the authorities became more vigilant. Some copies of a violent seditious proclamation fell into the hands of the police, and it was generally believed that the document proceeded from the coterie to which he belonged. From that moment he was carefully watched, till one night he was unexpectedly roused from his sleep by a gendarme and conveyed to the fortress.

When a man is arrested in this way for a real or supposed political offence, there are two modes of dealing with him: he may be tried before a regular tribunal, or he may be dealt with "by administrative procedure" (*administrativnym poryadkom*). In the former case he will, if convicted, be condemned to imprisonment for a certain term; or, if the offence be of a graver nature, he may be transported to Siberia either for a fixed period or for life. By the administrative procedure he is simply removed without a trial to some distant town, and compelled to live there under police supervision during his Majesty's pleasure. Nikolaï Ivan'itch was treated "administratively," because the authorities, though convinced that he was a dangerous character, could not find sufficient

evidence to procure his conviction before a court of justice. For five years he lived under police supervision in a small town near the White Sea, and then one day he was informed, without any explanation, that he might go and live anywhere he pleased except in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Since that time he has lived with his brother, and spends his time in brooding over his grievances and bewailing his shattered illusions. He has lost none of that fluency which gained him an ephemeral literary reputation, and can speak by the hour on political and social questions to anyone who will listen to him. It is extremely difficult, however, to follow his discourses, and utterly impossible to retain them in the memory. They belong to what may be called political metaphysics—for though he professes to hold metaphysics in abhorrence, he is himself a thorough metaphysician in his modes of thought. He lives, indeed, in a world of abstract conceptions, in which he can scarcely perceive concrete facts, and his arguments are always a kind of clever juggling with such equivocal, conventional terms as aristocracy, *bourgeoisie*, monarchy, and the like. At concrete facts he arrives, not directly by observation, but by deductions from general principles, so that his facts can never by any possibility contradict his theories. Then he has certain axioms which he tacitly assumes, and on which all his arguments are based; as, for instance, that everything to which the term "Liberal" can be applied must necessarily be good at all times and under all conditions.

Among a mass of vague conceptions which it is impossible to reduce to any clearly defined form he has a few ideas which are perhaps not strictly true, but which are at least intelligible. Among these is his conviction that Russia has let slip a magnificent

opportunity of distancing all Europe on the road of progress. She might, he thinks, at the time of the Emancipation, have boldly accepted all the most advanced principles of political and social science, and have completely reorganised the political and social structure in accordance with them. Other nations could not take such a step, because they are old and decrepit, filled with stubborn, hereditary prejudices, and cursed with an aristocracy and a *bourgeoisie;* but Russia is young, knows nothing of social castes, and has no deep-rooted prejudices to contend with. The population is like potter's clay, which can be made to assume any form that science may recommend. Alexander II. began a magnificent sociological experiment, but he stopped half-way.

Some day, he believes, the experiment will be completed, but not by the autocratic power. In his opinion, autocracy is "played out," and must give way to Parliamentary institutions. For him a Constitution is a kind of omnipotent fetish. You may try to explain to him that a Parliamentary *régime*, whatever its advantages may be, necessarily produces political parties and political conflicts, and is not nearly so suitable for grand sociological experiments as a good paternal despotism. You may try to convince him that, though it may be difficult to convert an autocrat, it is infinitely more difficult to convert a House of Commons. But all your efforts will be in vain. He will assure you that a Russian Parliament would be something quite different from what Parliaments commonly are. It would contain no parties, for Russia has no social castes, and would be guided entirely by scientific considerations—as free from prejudice and personal influences as a philosopher speculating on the nature of the Infinite! In short, he evidently imagines that a national Parliament

would be composed of himself and his friends, and that the nation would calmly submit to their ukazes as it has hitherto submitted to the ukazes of the Tsars.

Pending the advent of this political Millennium, when unimpassioned science is to reign supreme, Nikolaï Ivan'itch allows himself the luxury of indulging in some very decided political animosities, and he hates with the fervour of a fanatic. Firstly and chiefly, he hates what he calls the *bourgeoisie*—he is obliged to use the French word, because his native language does not contain an equivalent term—and especially capitalists of all sorts and dimensions. Next, he hates aristocracy, especially a form of aristocracy called Feudalism. To these abstract terms he does not attach a very precise meaning, but he hates the entities which they are supposed to represent quite as heartily as if they were personal enemies. Among the things which he hates in his own country, the Autocratic Power holds the first place. Next, as an emanation from the Autocratic Power, come the *tchinóvniks*, and especially the gendarmes. Then come the landed proprietors. Though he is himself a landed proprietor, he regards the class as cumberers of the ground, and thinks that all their land should be confiscated and distributed among the peasantry.

All proprietors have the misfortune to come under his sweeping denunciations, because they are inconsistent with his ideal of a peasant Empire, but he recognises amongst them degrees of depravity. Some are simply obstructive, whilst others are actively prejudicial to the public welfare. Among these latter a special object of aversion is Prince S——, because he not only possesses very large estates, but at the same time has aristocratic pretensions, and calls himself a Conservative.

Prince S—— is by far the most important man in the district. His family is one of the oldest in the country; but he does not owe his influence to his pedigree, for pedigree pure and simple does not count for much in Russia. He is influential and respected because he is a great landholder with a high official position, and belongs by birth to that group of families which forms the permanent nucleus of the ever-changing Court society. His father and grandfather were important personages in the administration and at Court, and his sons and grandsons will probably in this respect follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. Though in the eye of the law all nobles are equal, and, theoretically speaking, promotion is gained exclusively by personal merit, yet, in reality, those who have friends at Court rise more easily and more rapidly.

The Prince has had a prosperous but not very eventful life. He was educated, first at home, under an English tutor, and afterwards in the *Corps des Pages*. On leaving this institution he entered a regiment of the Guards, and rose steadily to high military rank. His activity, however, has been chiefly in the civil administration, and he now has a seat on the Council of State. Though he has always taken a certain interest in public affairs, he did not play an important part in any of the great reforms. When the peasant question was raised he sympathised with the idea of emancipation, but did not at all sympathise with the idea of giving land to the emancipated serfs and preserving the Communal institutions. What he desired was that the proprietors should liberate their serfs without any pecuniary indemnity, and should receive in return a certain share of political power. His scheme was not adopted, but he has not relinquished the hope that the great

landed proprietors may somehow obtain a social and political position similar to that of the great landowners in England.

Official duties and social relations compel the Prince to live for a large part of the year in the capital. He spends only a few weeks yearly on his estate. The house is large, and fitted up in the English style, with a view to combining elegance and comfort. It contains several spacious apartments, a library, and a billiard-room. There is an extensive park, an immense garden with hothouses, numerous horses and carriages, and a legion of servants. In the drawing-room is a plentiful supply of English and French books, newspapers, and periodicals, including the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg*, which gives the news of the day. The family have, in short, all the conveniences and comforts which money and refinement can procure, but it cannot be said that they greatly enjoy the time spent in the country. The Princess has no decided objection to it. She is devoted to a little grandchild, is fond of reading and correspondence, amuses herself with a school and hospital which she has founded for the peasantry, and occasionally drives over to see her friend, the Countess N——, who lives about fifteen miles off.

The Prince, however, finds country life excessively dull. He does not care for riding or shooting, and he finds nothing else to do. He knows nothing about the management of his estate, and holds consultations with the steward merely *pro forma*—this estate, and the others which he possesses in different provinces, being ruled by a head-steward in St. Petersburg, in whom he has the most complete confidence. In the vicinity there is no one with whom he cares to associate. Naturally he is not a sociable

man, and he has acquired a stiff, formal, reserved manner that is rarely met with in Russia. This manner repels the neighbouring proprietors—a fact that he does not at all regret, for they do not belong to his *monde*, and they have in their manners and habits a free-and-easy rusticity which is positively disagreeable to him. His relations with them are therefore confined to formal calls. The greater part of the day he spends in listless loitering, frequently yawning, regretting the routine of St. Petersburg life—the pleasant chats with his colleagues, the opera, the ballet, the French theatre, and the quiet rubber at the Club Anglais. His spirits rise as the day of his departure approaches, and when he drives off to the station he looks bright and cheerful. If he consulted merely his own tastes he would never visit his estates at all, and would spend his summer holidays in Germany, France, or Switzerland, as he did in his bachelor days; but as a large landowner he considers it right to sacrifice his personal inclinations to the duties of his position.

There is, by the way, another princely magnate in the district, and I ought perhaps to introduce him to my readers, because he represents worthily a new type. Like Prince S——, of whom I have just spoken, he is a great landowner and a descendant of the half-mythical Rurik; but he has no official rank, and does not possess a single *grand cordon*. In that respect he has followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, who had something of the *frondeur* spirit, and preferred the position of a *grand seigneur* and a country gentleman to that of a *tchinóvnik* and a courtier. In the Liberal camp he is regarded as a Conservative, but he has little in common with the *Krepostnik*, who declares that the reforms of the last half-century were a mistake, that everything is going

to the bad, that the emancipated serfs are all sluggards, drunkards, and thieves, that the local self-government is an ingenious machine for wasting money, and that the reformed law-courts have conferred benefits only on the lawyers. On the contrary, he recognises the necessity and beneficent results of the reforms, and with regard to the future he has none of the despairing pessimism of the incorrigible old Tory.

But in order that real progress should be made, he thinks that certain current and fashionable errors must be avoided, and among these errors he places, in the first rank, the views and principles of the advanced Liberals, who have a blind admiration for Western Europe, and for what they are pleased to call the results of science. Like the Liberals of the West, these gentlemen assume that the best form of government is constitutionalism, monarchical or republican, on a broad democratic basis, and towards the realisation of this ideal all their efforts are directed. Not so our Conservative friend. While admitting that democratic Parliamentary institutions may be the best form of government for the more advanced nations of the West, he maintains that the only firm foundation for the Russian Empire, and the only solid guarantee of its future prosperity, is the Autocratic Power, which is the sole genuine representative of the national spirit. Looking at the past from this point of view, he perceives that the Tsars have ever identified themselves with the nation, and have always understood, in part instinctively and in part by reflection, what the nation really required. Whenever the infiltration of Western ideas threatened to swamp the national individuality, the Autocratic Power intervened and averted the danger by timely precautions. Some-

thing of the kind may be observed, he believes, at present, when the Liberals are clamouring for a Parliament and a Constitution; but the Autocratic Power is on the alert, and will as usual do what is necessary.

With the efforts of the Zemstvo in this direction, and with the activity of the Zemstvo generally, the Prince has little sympathy, partly because the institution is in the hands of the Liberals and is guided by their unpractical ideas, and partly because it enables some ambitious outsiders to acquire the influence in local affairs which ought to be exercised by the old-established noble families of the neighbourhood. What he would like to see is an enlightened, influential gentry working in conjunction with the Autocratic Power for the good of the country. If Russia could produce a few hundred thousand men like himself, his ideal might perhaps be realised. For the present, such men are extremely rare—I should have difficulty in naming a dozen of them—and such aristocratic ideas are very unpopular among the great majority of the educated classes. When a Russian indulges in political speculation, he is pretty sure to show himself thoroughly democratic, with a strong leaning to socialism.

The Prince belongs to the highest rank of the Russian Noblesse. If we wish to get an idea of the lowest rank, we can find in the neighbourhood a number of poor, uneducated nobles, who live in small, squalid houses, and are not easily to be distinguished from peasants. In other parts of the country we might find men in this condition bearing the title of prince! This is the natural result of the Russian law of inheritance, which does not recognise the principle of primogeniture with regard to titles and estates.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOCIAL CLASSES.

Do Social Classes or Castes exist in Russia?—Well-marked Social Types—Classes recognised by Legislation and the Official Statistics—Origin and Gradual Formation of these Classes—Peculiarity in the Historical Development of Russia—Political Life and Political Parties.

In the preceding pages I have repeatedly used the expression "social classes," and probably more than once the reader has felt inclined to ask, What are social classes in the Russian sense of the term? It may be well, therefore, before going further, to answer this question.

If the question were put to a Russian it is not at all unlikely that he would reply somewhat in this fashion: "In Russia there are no social classes, and there never have been any. That fact constitutes one of the most striking peculiarities of her historical development, and one of the surest foundations of her future greatness. We know nothing, and have never known anything, of those class distinctions and class enmities which in Western Europe have often rudely shaken society in past times, and imperil its existence in the future."

This statement will not be readily accepted by the traveller who visits Russia with no preconceived ideas and forms his opinions from his own observations. To him it seems that class distinctions form one of the most prominent characteristics of Russian society. In a few days he learns to distinguish the various classes by their outward appearance. He easily recognises the French-speaking nobles in West-European costume;

the burly, bearded merchant in black cloth cap and long, shiny, double-breasted coat; the priest with his uncut hair and flowing robes; the peasant with his full, fair beard and unsavoury, greasy sheepskin. Meeting everywhere those well-marked types, he naturally assumes that Russian society is composed of exclusive castes; and this first impression will be fully confirmed by a glance at the Code. On examining that monumental work, he finds that an entire volume—and by no means the smallest—is devoted to the rights and obligations of the various classes. From this he concludes that the classes have a legal as well as an actual existence. To make assurance doubly sure he turns to official statistics, and there he finds the following table:—

Hereditary nobles	652,887
Personal nobles	374,367
Clerical Classes	695,905
Town Classes	7,196,005
Rural Classes	63,840,291
Military Classes	4,767,703
Foreigners	153,135
	77,680,293 *

Armed with these materials, the traveller goes to his Russian friends who have assured him that their country knows nothing of class distinctions. He is confident of being able to convince them that they have been labouring under a strange delusion, but he will be disappointed. They will tell him that these laws and statistics prove nothing, and that the categories therein mentioned are mere administrative fictions.

This apparent contradiction is to be explained by

* Livron: "Statistitcheskoe Obozrênie Rossiiskoi Imperii," St. Petersburg, 1875. The above figures include the whole Empire. The figures according to the latest census (1897) are not yet available.

the equivocal meaning of the Russian terms *Sosloviya* and *Sostoyaniya*, which are commonly translated "social classes." If by these terms are meant "castes" in the Oriental sense, then it may be confidently asserted that such do not exist in Russia. Between the nobles, the clergy, the burghers, and the peasants there are no distinctions of race and no impassable barriers. The peasant often becomes a merchant, and there are many cases on record of peasants and sons of parish priests becoming nobles. Until very recently the parish clergy composed, as we have seen, a peculiar and exclusive class, with many of the characteristics of a caste; but this has been changed, and it may now be said that in Russia there are no castes in the Oriental sense.

If the word *Sosloviya* be taken to mean an organised political unit with an *esprit de corps* and a clearly conceived political aim, it may likewise be admitted that there are none in Russia. As there has been for centuries no political life among the subjects of the Tsars, there have been no political parties.

On the other hand, to say that social classes have never existed in Russia and that the categories which appear in the legislation and in the official statistics are mere administrative fictions, is a piece of gross exaggeration.

From the very beginning of Russian history we can detect unmistakably the existence of social classes, such as the princes, the *Boyárs*, or armed followers of the princes, the peasantry, the slaves, and various others; and one of the oldest legal documents which we possess—the "Russian Right" (*Rússkaya Pravda*) of the Grand Prince Yaroslaff (1019–1054)—contains irrefragable proof, in the penalties attached to various crimes, that these classes were formally recognised by the legislation. Since that time they have frequently

changed their character, but they have never at any period ceased to exist.

In ancient times, when there was very little administrative regulation, the classes had perhaps no clearly defined boundaries, and the peculiarities which distinguished them from each other were actual rather than legal—lying in the mode of life and social position rather than in peculiar obligations and privileges. But as the autocratic power developed and strove to transform the nation into a State with a highly centralised administration, the legal element in the social distinctions became more and more prominent. For financial and other purposes the people had to be divided into various categories. The actual distinctions were of course taken as the basis of the legal classification, but the classifying had more than a merely formal significance. The necessity of clearly defining the different groups entailed the necessity of elevating and strengthening the barriers which already existed between them, and the difficulty of passing from one group to another was thereby increased.

In this work of classification Peter the Great especially distinguished himself. With his insatiable passion for regulation, he raised formidable barriers between the different categories, and defined the obligations of each with microscopic minuteness. After his death the work was carried on in the same spirit, and the tendency reached its climax in the reign of Nicholas I., when the number of students to be received in the universities was determined by Imperial ukaz!

In the reign of Catherine a new element was introduced into the official conception of social classes. Down to her time the Government had thought merely of class obligations; under the influence of Western ideas she introduced the conception of class

rights. She wished, as we have seen, to have in her Empire a noblesse and a *tiers-état* like those which existed in France, and for this purpose she granted, first to the *Dvoryánstvo* and afterwards to the towns, an Imperial Charter, or Bill of Rights. Succeeding Sovereigns have acted in the same spirit, and the Code now confers on each class numerous privileges as well as numerous obligations.

Thus, we see, the oft-repeated assertion that the Russian social classes are simply artificial categories created by the legislature is to a certain extent true, but is by no means accurate. The social groups, such as peasants, landed proprietors, and the like, came into existence in Russia, as in other countries, by the simple force of circumstances. The legislature merely recognised and developed the social distinctions which already existed. The legal status, obligations, and rights of each group were minutely defined and regulated, and legal barriers were added to the actual barriers which separated the groups from each other.

What is peculiar in the historical development of Russia is this: until lately she remained an almost exclusively agricultural Empire with abundance of unoccupied land. Her history presents, therefore, few of those conflicts which result from the variety of social conditions and the intensified struggle for existence. Certain social groups were, indeed, formed in the course of time, but they were never allowed to fight out their own battles. The irresistible autocratic power kept them always in check and fashioned them into whatever form it thought proper, defining minutely and carefully their obligations, their rights, their mutual relations, and their respective positions in the political organisation. Hence we find in the history of Russia almost no trace of those class

hatreds which appear so conspicuously in the history of Western Europe.*

The practical consequence of all this is that in Russia at the present day there is very little caste spirit or caste prejudice. Within half-a-dozen years after the emancipation of the serfs, proprietors and peasants, forgetting apparently their old relationship of master and serf, were working amicably together in the new local administration, and not a few similar curious facts might be cited. The confident anticipation of many Russians that their country will one day enjoy political life without political parties is, if not a contradiction in terms, at least a Utopian absurdity; but we may be sure that when political parties do appear they will be very different from those which exist in Germany, France, and England.

Meanwhile, let us see how the country is governed without political parties and without political life in the West-European sense of the term. This will form the subject of the first Chapter of Volume II.

* This is, I believe, the true explanation of an important fact, which the Slavophils endeavoured to explain by an ill-authenticated legend (*vide supra* p. 212).

END OF VOL. I.

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